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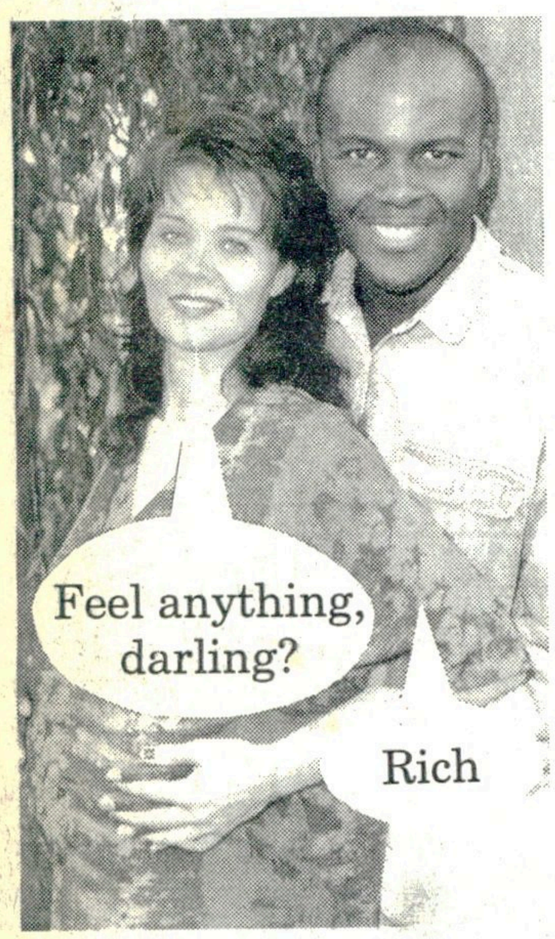

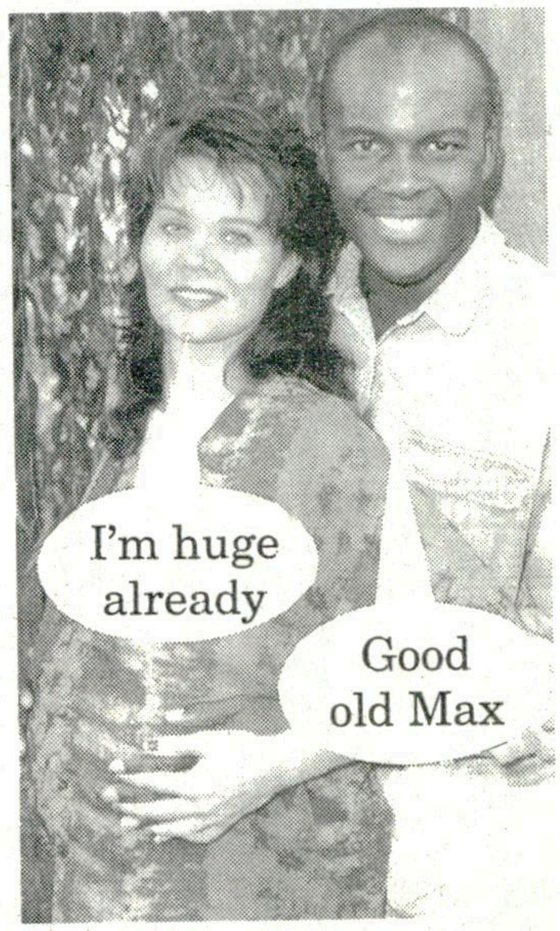

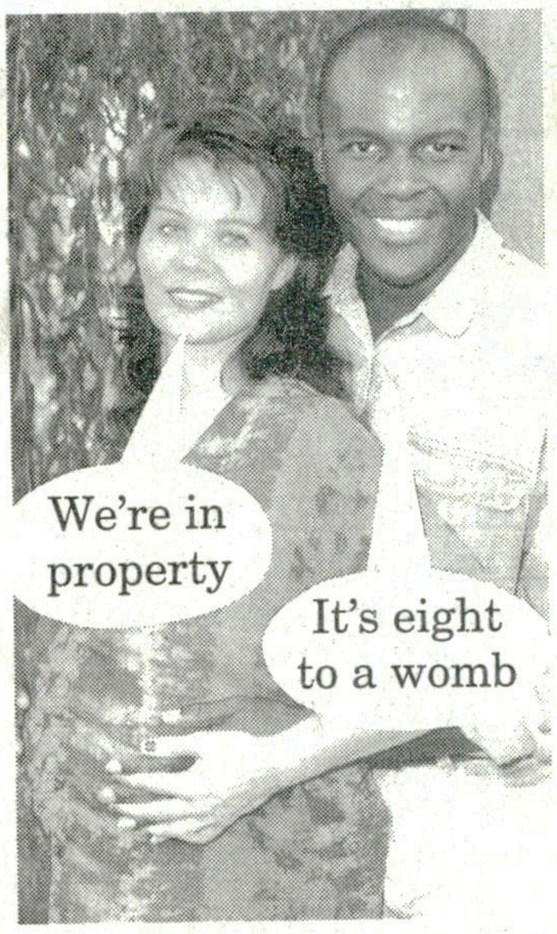

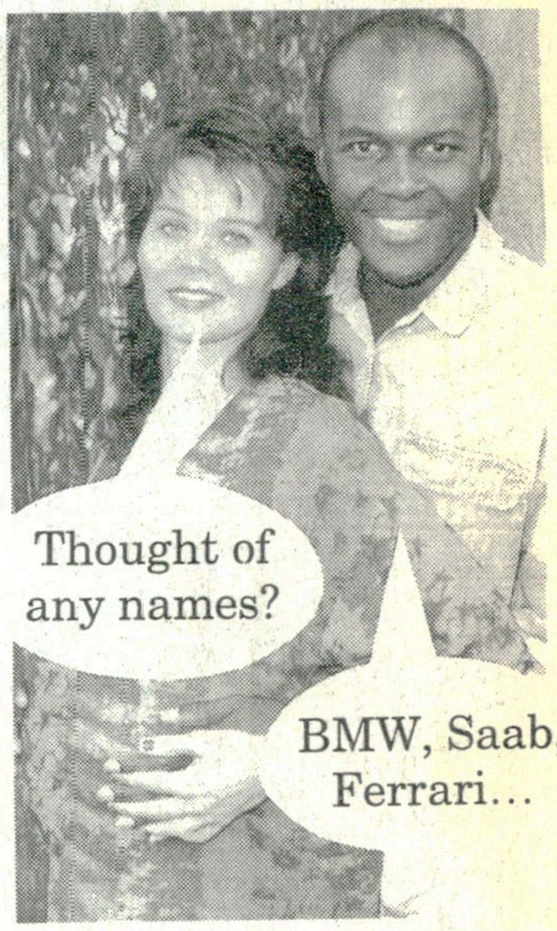

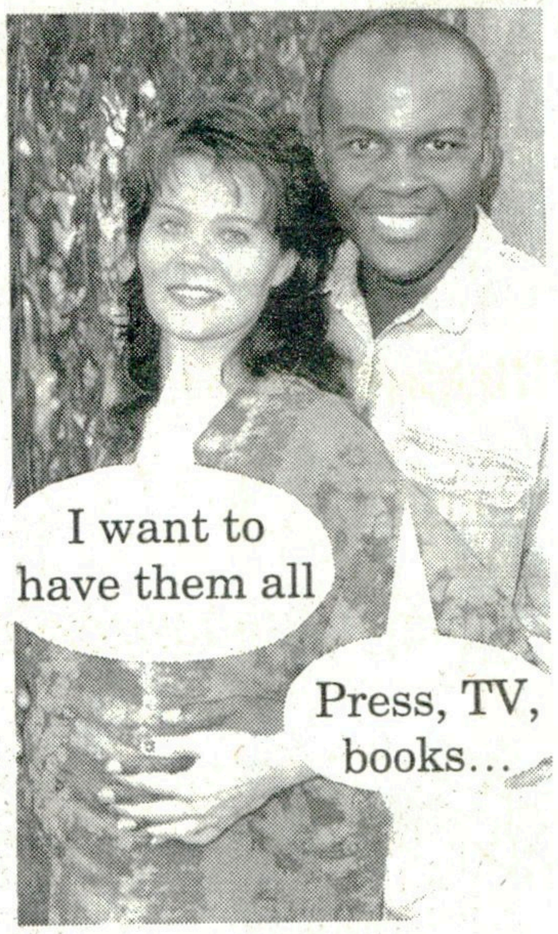

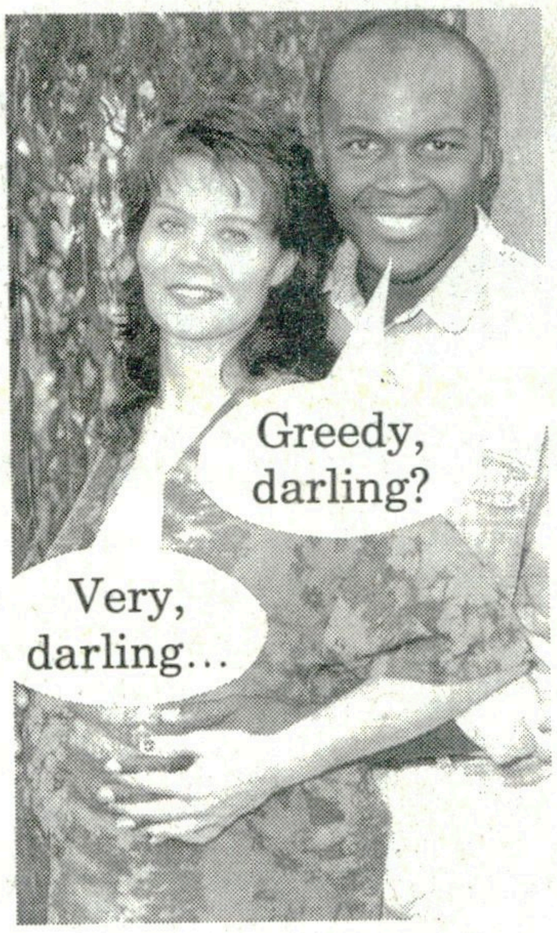

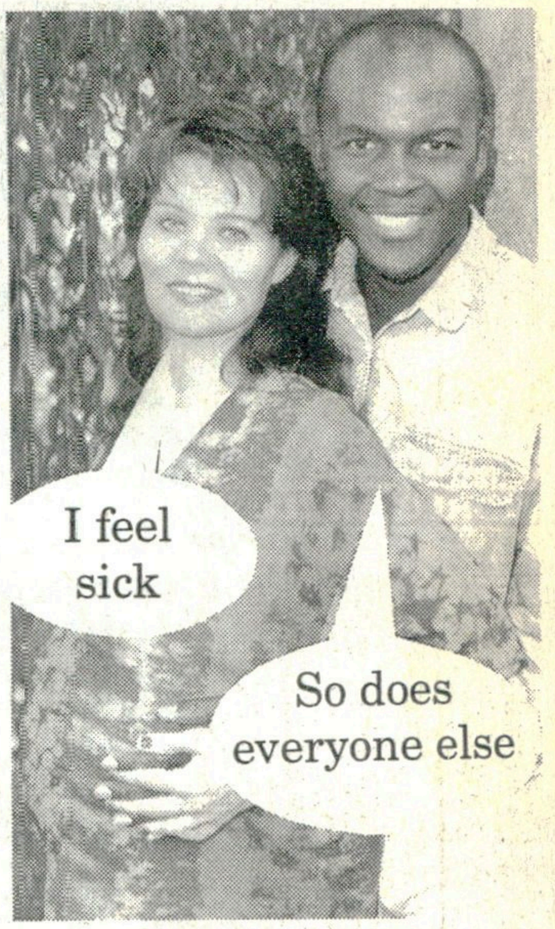

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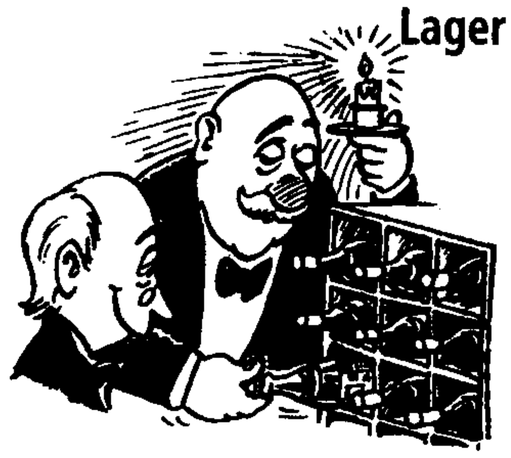

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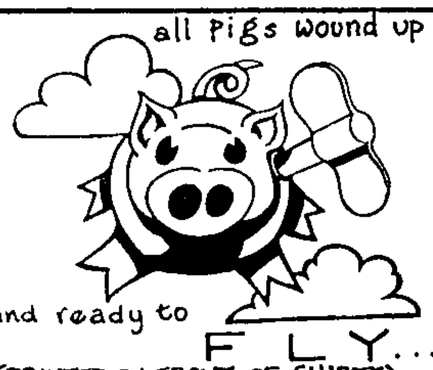

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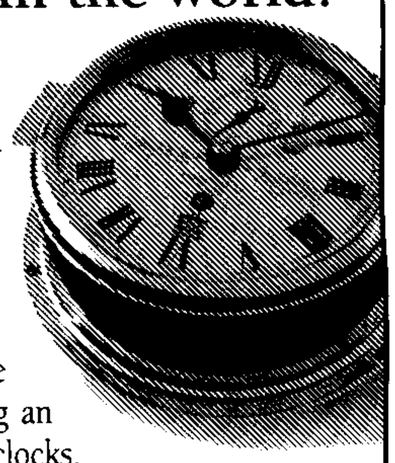

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From The Chairman of "Batteries-R-Us"

Last week I received an extremely impertinent letter from someone called Tony Blair who said he was writing to me as a very important and very senior leader of the business community .

He rudely wanted to reassure me about the intentions of the Labour Party, should it ever gain office and, without being asked, described some of *his* plans to me.

I decided that, despite this affront, it would only be polite of me to reply so I immediately contacted the Daily Mail.

I told them that in my unbiased opinion Labour were utterly pathetic and all their ideas were useless. In particular, I pointed out that:

- Stakeholding would mean a loss of two million jobs.
- A minimum wage would mean a loss of 20 million jobs.
- Joining the Social Chapter would mean a loss of 200 million jobs.
- Increased taxes on top earners would mean a loss of money for myself.

The Mail and a number of other independent newspapers chose to use my comments as conclusive evidence that Mr Blair and Labour are completely washed up.

I am glad to say that no one was feeble enough to point out that my company and I both donate large amounts of cash to the Conservative Party or that I was given my title by the last Conservative Government.

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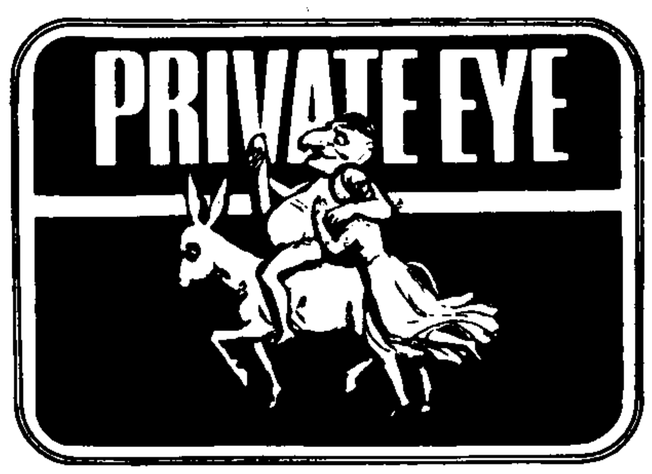


COLOUR SECTION

STEPHEN LITTLECHILD, the electricity regulator, has cut the National Grid's revenue by £300m. The reason he gave for cutting transmission charges was that there is "scope for economy" in the "relatively high" pay for top executives.

He did not explain why he had not noticed, during the six years since the industry was privatised, what was happening, or why he had not acted over the gravy trains which had been running for National Power, PowerGen and the Regional Electricity Companies.

Claire Spottiswoode, the gas regulator, has proposed cuts of 20-28 percent for the price that the British Gas pipeline arm is allowed to charge other companies for the use of its pipes. That would reduce the British Gas cashflow by £300m, exactly the figure that is to be cut from the National Grid — purely by coincidence, of course.

Ian Byatt, the water regulator, has held a series of meetings with City institutions, which are the biggest shareholders in the water companies, urging them to act against the vast pay-and-perk packages which the top people in the water companies have been awarding themselves. It has taken him only seven years since water was privatised to notice what was happening.

The three regulators are all ardent supporters of the government. Littlechild is a monetarist professor who played a leading role in working out privatisation; Spottiswoode worked for the Treasury, briefing Margaret Thatcher, and then moved to the Department of Trade and Industry's engineering de-regulation task force, tearing up any regulations that might annoy big business; Byatt was a Treasury high-flyer during the Thatcher years.

None of this will have been allowed to influence their actions in the run-up to a general election because they are all, by statute, independent. They will not have been approached by the Department of Trade and Industry and told to do a bit of window-dressing to make privatisation look better. That would have been unethical. So it can't have happened, can it?

THE privatisation of British (nuclear) Energy has flopped. The sale price was pitched as low as the government's advisers, BZW, dared to produce a total of £1.4bn — even so, the Department of Trade and Industry has been left with £165m in unsold shares.

The sale was to have been the last triumph of Tim Eggar, the Energy Minister, who left the government to seek his fortune in the city and would have liked to present himself as the man who could sell even nuclear power. In a valedictory address to the Royal Institute of International Affairs last month he said: "We have all but sold most of nuclear electricity — something too difficult to do back in 1990." Or in 1996, he could now add.

He earlier took a swipe at two leading critics, Gordon McKerron, adviser to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, and Mike Sadnicki, nuclear economist, who are colleagues on the Science Policy Research Unit at Sussex University. Their research was "absolute garbage", said the minister.

Mr McKerron commented: "It is always nice for one's suspicions to be found true. We always took the view that the approximate value of British Energy was about zero.

"I was delighted when Eggar described our report as 'absolute garbage'. If people haven't got something substantive to say they resort to abuse. Abuse is much the best kind of criticism to receive because it means they haven't got any argument against you."

AS THE Welsh utility giant Hyder celebrated its first AGM with profits of £167m it announced plans to phase out the lucrative share options scheme in favour of "long-term incentive schemes" for its directors.

Poor chief executive Graham Hawker will have to make do with £225,000 next year, a paltry 20 per cent payrise. Grant Hawkins, the chairman of Hyder's remuneration committee, argued that the change was the result of an extensive review of the recommendations of the Greenbury Committee.

This is not quite the whole story, however, for Hawker and his buddies had a bumper windfall last year — exercising their, er, share options.

While Graham Hawker was cashing in 39,796 shares, to make almost £300,000, Brian Charles, in charge of the water section, walked away with £400,000 and Paul Twamley, the finance director, with just over £600,000. Meanwhile the utility has shed 900 jobs in "efficiency" cuts.

SOUTH West Water's customer relations are as frosty as ever. The company recently donated £1080 to Exmouth Town Council to buy mayoral robes to make up for the disruption caused by sewerage works in the town. While the company was being so officially magnanimous the chairman of the National Campaign for Water Justice, Neil Fishpool, was contacted by a tearful 88-year-old who had received a court summons by motorbike despatch rider from SWW earlier in the day.

This is also the water company whose former managing director, Bill Fraser, has just received a £300,000 pay-off (See *Eye* 904).

AFTER his embarrassing failure to win an action for contempt of court, Attorney General Sir Nicholas Lyell tried again to bring the national newspapers to book for "prejudicing" a jury against Gillian Taylforth's lover, Geoff Knights, by reporting his fight with a taxidriver (*Eye* 904).

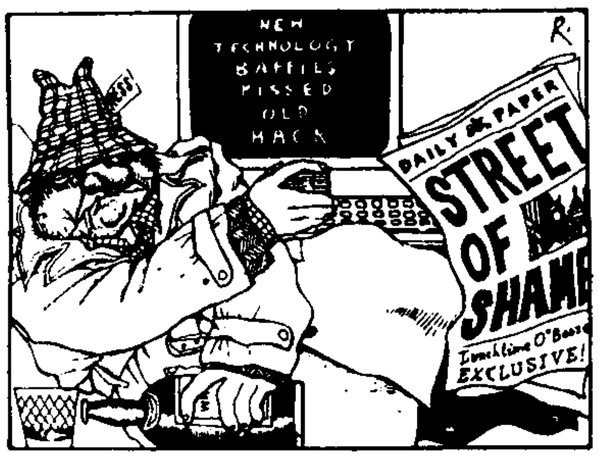
Lyell vowed to take the case to the House of Lords. His representatives duly drew up an elaborate document and sent it off.

Alas, the petition was lodged a day too late and the Lords refused to accept it. Lyell had miscounted the 14-day time-limit, clearly laid down in law, in which the petition should have been lodged, imagining it did not include the day of the judgement in court. It did.

The sound of tittering at the incompetence of Lie-All has been heard emanating from several editors' offices all week.

- *FUN IN THE OVEN: Max Clifford et al* 6
- *Hallo! to Alan Clark* 7
- *New TV Schedules* 10
- *World Service Row* 11
- *Edna O'Brien Shock* 27

"These pictures of me everywhere have got to stop!"



MEDIA pundits have leapt eagerly into the row between snooty *Sunday Express* hackette Caroline Phillips and Queen Charlotte's hospital over the abortion of a twin foetus. Did Phillips tastelessly sensationalise the story, pretending the decision was yet to be made, or did Professor Phillip Bennett, the doctor at St Charlotte's, misinform the hackette?

Steven Glover, a former *Evening Standard* colleague of Phillips's, jumped to her defence in the *Spectator*. He used the opportunity to have another dig at his old boss Max Hastings, who had "foolishly parted company with the enterprising Miss Phillips".

Rival newspapers loudly recorded the hospital's insistence that the *Sunday Express* had changed Bennett's words.

Now the embattled newspaper faces an injunction from the hospital restraining it from identifying the mother involved or approaching anyone who has nursed her.

Phillips is fondly remembered at the *Standard*. As a young reporter "Milady" Phillips ventured bravely to the Yorkshire miners' picket lines a decade ago, decked out in green wellies and Hermes scarf.

"Where do you work?" she grandly enquired of one of the locals she interviewed.

The man replied, in the Yorkshire venacular, that he was a colliery surface worker. Transcribed by Phillips — with her now celebrated accuracy — the *Standard* duly attributed the man's comments to a striking miner from the "village of Topperpit"!

ANDREW "Brillo Pad" Neill has completed his long-awaited autobiography — long-awaited, at least, by booksellers specialising in remainders. But even if it is unlikely to shift many copies, Brillo Pad can expect a bumper pay-day from the sale of the serial rights.

Or can he? A couple of weeks ago his hot-shot agent, Ed Victor, rang round Fleet Street with the glad tidings that Neill's text was now ready for inspection. Selected editors would be allowed to come and read the masterpiece in Victor's office on a Wednesday, under conditions of great secrecy; they would then have to put in their bids by close of business the following day.

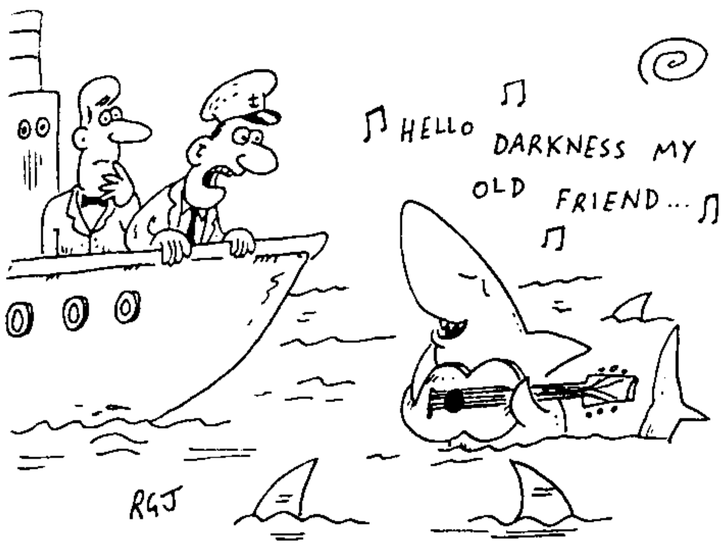
On the Thursday afternoon Victor faxed *Daily Mail* editor Paul Dacre expressing his surprise that no bid had yet been received from the *Mail* — for which, in his guise as "The Voice of Controversy", Brillo pens a weekly column. Dacre did not reply.

An hour later Victor sent another fax. He was "disgusted" by Dacre's dilatory attitude. If no bid was received within half an hour, he would sell the book to one of the other newspapers which were clamouring for it.

Dacre then offered £20,000.

Victor was even more disgusted. "I want a minimum of £100,000," he snapped. Dacre said that the *Mail* might go up to £30,000 but certainly no higher. To his surprise, Victor hastily accepted the offer and biked round a contract.

What had happened to all the other potential buyers? Er, they seem to have disappeared — apart from the *Daily Express*, which, in charitable spirit, had offered a paltry £10,000. Even the *Sunday Times*, Neill's old paper, did not bid at all!



"Oh no! Busking sharks!"

SHARP-EYED *Evening Standard* diarist Catherine Blyth spotted a story in her own paper's front page photo. The picture of grinning Tony Blair and his wife Cherie on holiday in Italy showed the Labour leader's wife was wearing the same dress she had worn on an earlier trip to Australia!

Quickly the hackette dashed off a story bemoaning "poor" Cherie's lack of a wardrobe selection. To her suprise, in the final edition her story was nowhere to be seen.

Cherie had not worn the "wrong" dress. The paper had printed the wrong picture — taken, indeed, when the Blairs were in Australia, not Tuscany.

This cock-up surely had nothing to do with the havoc wreaked on the picture desk by the enthusiastic hire and fire policies of the newspaper's editor, Max "Hitler" Hastings.

Fun in the oven

MAX CLIFFORD'S latest offering — the story of Mandy Allwood, 14 weeks into her octuplet pregnancy — is causing complications for *News of the Screws* editor Phil Hall.

With almost six more expensive and controversial months to go before the births, Hall is already facing criticism from MPs, GPs and rival newspapers. Worst of all, some of the flak is coming from newspapers in the same stable as the *Screws* — News Group (prop: R. Murdoch). And all because the newspaper has paid for the story.

Hall's prognosis was poor from the start. Thanks to a sneaky tip-off, the *Screws* "World Exclusive" was actually born prematurely in the *Sun* — keen to share the excitement of mum-to-be Mandy, especially while somebody else was paying for the story. "Pregnant with Eight Babies" it announced, even as *Screws* subs laboured with their own front, adding: "The incredible sensation of seeing a life inside you will be magnified over and over for her... We hope and pray everything goes well for Mandy and her brood." As far as the press goes, fat chance. Hacks across the country found their weekends interrupted by newsdesks eager for more information about mum and dad.

Undeterred, the *Screws* ran its piece the following day: "I'm Going to Have ALL my 8 Babies". Eight babies and, according to Clifford, "about £1m in sponsorship and deals". (*Screws*, Aug 11). This was OK, because "A supermum's cot to be rich!" and, well, newspapers pay for stories all the time.

Alerted by the *Sun*'s story, the *Mail on Sunday* ran a double page spread on the 11th, condemning "this Baby Business". The paper pontificated about Mandy's pregnancy: "It should have been a moment of wonderment. Instead it quickly became a circus." (This *Mail on Sunday*, by the way, should not be confused with the paper of the same name that is paying vast sums to middle-aged grandmother Edith Jones, who is carrying her daughter's child for her.)

Hall had lost his exclusive but still had the heartwarming story of lovely, miracle couple and medical history in the making. Until hacks started investigating Mandy's novel relationship with lover Paul — still seeing his previous *amour*, Maria. Unusually for the *Screws*, this love triangle was made to seem unremarkable and downplayed on page five: "Paul tells me he rarely makes love with Maria though they still share a bed. He says the main reason for seeing her is the kids and I tend to believe it. The situation suits me fine..." said Mandy (*Screws*, Aug 11).

Hmmm. Well at least Paul was good to his kids by Maria: "He is great with our two sons and my older daughter Jamie-Lee — even though she's not his. He comes and visits them every other day and plays with them like a devoted dad. Whenever he's got money he does fork out for the kids..." said Maria. (*Screws*, Aug 11).

Whoops! Unfortunately for the *Screws*, Maria (with some encouragement from the *Sun*'s own chequebook) changed her story: "The cheated ex-girlfriend of love rat Paul Hudson last night accused him of being a rotten dad." Why? "He doesn't even pay for their upkeep... I could count on one hand the number of times he's spent a whole weekend with the children." (*Sun* Aug 13)

That and details about Mandy's adultery with Paul while still married to Simon Pugh gave rivals a great new peg. The *Daily Mirror* denounced mum: "An adulterer such as Mandy seems an unlikely candidate to provide the stable family environment the children need" — a sentiment no doubt endorsed by Mirror Group chief executive David "Rommel" Montgomery as he pored over the story with his own pregnant mistress.

Unfortunately for Hall, *Sun* hacks were ahead of the field in the hunt for more uncomfortable details. "I Got My 8 Babies Free From Boots: Pregnant Mandy Allwood conceived her eight babies with a FREE prescription from Boots... She did not have to pay for it because she is a single mum on income support," said the *Sun*, signalling its support for the welfare state (Aug 12).

Saturday's "miracle" pregnancy had become a "freak". We learned that "Mandy drives a sporty blue Golf GTI and Paul a silver BMW, despite living on benefits," that police have been asked to investigate "dodgy dealings" in their property management company, that "Mandy's heartbroken mother Marion said last night: 'She is no longer my girl — I don't want to see her again'." Even "ex-husband Simon's father branded Mandy a 'moneygrabber' after she negotiated a deal to sell her story". Not that the *Sun* would ever negotiate for a story like this.

Hall got some sympathy from the *Times*, albeit of a weasly nature: "The prospect of the births being encouraged by a sliding scale of newspaper payments has produced widespread dissent. Money was not, however, at the root of this issue: it exacerbated an existing set of conditions and brought it to wider notice."

By the end of the first week little was left to know — the couple's safe house had been found and the combined activities of eight newspapers led to Mandy's specialist threatening to withdraw treatment. In these circumstances all Hall could do was stress the responsible attitude of the paper: "Professor Nicolaides has asked that she keep some details of the consultations private and the *News of the World* is respecting that." These "private" details did not include pictures of ultrasound scans, or information about scans and membranes of course. Subs rose to new heights of colour writing, too, as orders went out to emphasise the glories of motherhood and the happiness of a "miracle mum". "As she talked to the *News of the World*, Mandy hugged the scan and sobbed with delight: 'This just brings home how real my babies are... That's why we're grateful to the *News of the World* for getting us away from it all to such a relaxing environment. It's such a relief for us both to be somewhere safe'." (*Screws* Aug 18)

LORD Rees-Mogg had a long whinge in the *Sunset Times* of 11 August about President Clinton's signing of a "grotesque bill" imposing sanctions on foreign companies which trade with Iran. This "extraordinary blunder" will "poison relations with America's allies... What weakens America weakens the world."

So apoplectic was Grease-Smog that he forgot to declare his own interest. Smog is a director of GEC, which has never troubled itself over selling hardware to Iran. GEC lost millions of pounds in sales when military exports to the Middle East were suspended during the Gulf War.

How odd that Smog didn't take the usual opportunity to remind readers of his own expertise!

I-I-I Special

THIS issue's Kim Il Sung Memorial Award goes to Great Thinker and Guardian Leader Writer Martin Kettle who broke all records with a glorious 63 references to self in a single column (*Guardian*, 3rd August).

FILTH UPDATE

"WORZEL the Nice Girls Gone?" asked the *News of the Screws* in an article devoted to the exposure of vice dens in England's countryside.

One of their discoveries was "the delightful, flower-filled village" of Aycliffe, Co. Durham, where "madam Sue taps a well of vice". The *Screws*' intrepid reporter was introduced to "Vikki, 18", who reeled off a price list for sex and claimed that most of her clients were farmers.

When the paper appeared Sue and Vikki were astounded. They insist that the article's references to sheep and farmers were fabricated.

What the *Screws* man did not know was that the pair routinely video clients for security reasons. In this case it was the hack who was caught with his pants down.

The newspaper is refusing to name the reporter involved. The furious trollops are taking their case — and their video — to the Press Complaints Commission.

Madam Sue points out that the mystery hack even misquoted the price for sex as £50. "It's actually £40," she says. "He must have been fiddling his expenses."

SCOTTISH readers of the *News of the Screws* were recently treated to a typically tacky tale of how a topless female fire-eater was luring punters away from prostitutes in Edinburgh.

The *Screws* was kind enough to print a revealing (ie topless) picture of "raunchy" Lynne Daniels whose red-hot, fire-eating act is a Big Top attraction at the nearby Circus of Horrors.

But it was hapless *Screws* hack Edward Trevor, the author of this scoop, who had the heat turned up the following day. The *Daily Record* revealed that raunchy Lynne was actually one Gary Peters. Gary became Lynne in 1982 when he forked out £2500 to change gender. Phwoarr!

SINCE its takeover by censorious teetotaller Lord "Alco" Hollick readers are reminded more than ever that the *Daily Star* is a "family" newspaper. Why else would the responsible parents of Essex girls allow their buxom Sharons and Traceys to appear topless in it?

It wouldn't do if those parents heard ridiculous rumours about one 17-year old aspiring "model" who recently attended a *Star* photo shoot. Having undressed and then been plied with drink — the absurd tale goes — the innocent Sam Fox wannabee woke up hours later to find her pubic hair shaven off.

Star editor Phil Walker's rant at hacks that he would "nut anyone who tells *Private Eye* about this" must all have been a terrible misunderstanding!

"Sorry dear, is the fan on too high?"

HALLO! THE HEARTWARMING COLUMN

HALLO! DASHING diarist Alan Clark is wandering around town with a mournful look. He tells young ladies at parties that he has something in his trousers they might be interested in. He then fishes around in his pocket and takes out an an exquisite diamond, to oohs and aahs all round! Why so glum? Alan confides that he bought the sparkler for a special someone he was terribly keen on — but when the *tendresse* fizzled out he had to ask for it back. Who says the age of chivalry is dead?

HALLO! MY FRIEND Taki Takealotof-cokeupthenos is a sociable man of impeccable behaviour. He finds any hint of snobbery or bad manners in others distressing in the extreme. So it was quite understandable of him to point out in his "Atticus" column in the *Sunday Times* that the late American fashion designer Halston "posed as a gent — a Hollywood version, of course — nose in the air, frosty manner — and [had] a supercilious look, even when coked out of his mind (which he was most of the time)". How different from dear Taki himself, whom I have always found to be perfectly charming, even when coked out of his mind!

HALLO! TO THE annual garden party of the Chelsea Conservative Association, where the Marquesa awaits on tenterhooks the arrival of Sir Nicholas Scott and his delightful wife, the Honourable Cecilia.

It was she who picked up a tidy £50,000 from the *News of the World* after it disgracefully described her as accompanying her husband on the occasion of that unfortunate misunderstanding last year involving a tired Sir Nicholas and a small boy who idiotically become wedged between Sir Nick's car and another one. The gutter press irresponsibly suggested that it was Lady Cecilia who rudely harangued onlookers as Sir Nicholas tactfully beat a hasty retreat from the scene of the accident, when it was in fact his secretary!

When the couple arrive, a boorish fellow on the gate digs his heels in. For the first time ever, the distinguished knight is forced to pay for his ticket. But grand Sir Nicholas — just like royalty — sensibly carries no cash! Eventually Lady Cecilia graciously digs into her handbag and hands over £30.

Which leaves the poor dear with just £49,970 holiday money left.

HALLO! *THE Marquesa has had to let go an assistant who accepted on her behalf an invitation to a gathering at the Rivoli Ballroom, assuming it to be a sophisticated soiree. Imagine one's distress on finding oneself at a rally in a seedy part of south London for an obscure charity called the Socialist Labour Party! The only entertainment on offer was a speech by someone called Arthur Scargill. Fortunately, someone had the good sense to tune the public address system into a French radio station, so that this unpleasant man's words were drowned out! It was a horrible experience, my dears. We will not be venturing south of the river again in a hurry!*

HALLO! *HALLO*'s Matthew Freud award for PR Boobie of the Week goes to Pat Jay, handling Peter Stringfellow's sophisticated new strip-and-tip fiesta, Cabaret of Angels.

One recipient of a glitzy opening night invitation to quaff champagne and "meet our girls close up" is Brian Sewell, waspish art critic of the *Evening Standard*. Alas, poor Pat's offer of smelling salts, free champagne and girlies is grandly rebuffed, He has failed to notice that Sewell is not as other gentlemen of the press. He doesn't drink champagne!

HALLO! THE Marquesa squirmed with embarrassment for her old friend Glenda Jackson MP when she was photographed on the beach at Benidorm in the company of tattooed members of the labouring classes!

La Jackson is no stranger to embarrassment, alas! In 1991 the *Eye* commented the Labour party would look silly if it ever criticised the Hanson Trust, because Glenda had featured in ads boosting the firm's robust, corporate image.

Recently an irate MP was quoted in the *Guardian*, berating the Hanson Trust and other Tory donors involved in the rail sell-off: "Not only have massive profits been made on the gross undervaluation of public assets, but it now emerges that a significant portion of those profits are finding their way to companies actively involved in bank-rolling the Conservative Party."

Could this have been a certain former star of film — and Hanson advertisements? It certainly could!

HALLO! THERE has been much coverage in the press about the miraculous escape of my talented young model, PR assistant, researcher and (this month) actress friend Lisa Hogan. A close personal friend of, amongst others, Baron Stephen Bentininck and airline owner Tony Ryan, Lisa was fortunate to survive the crash of Baron Bonker's Lear jet on the A40.

A disagreeable little woman called Anne Robinson was predictably negative, but even Ireland's *Sunday Independent* repeated the no doubt ludicrous tale that Lisa parted from her then boyfriend Gavin O'Reilly (funnily enough, the son of the paper's proprietor, Tony) by stripping naked in the middle of a party and diving into a swimming pool. This refreshing method of ending a relationship brought, it is said, Lisa to the attention of talent scout John Cleese, to whose film set she was commuting when her jet crashed.

Jealousy, of course, is at the root of such tittle tattle. But I am slightly surprised that one man has not leapt to Lisa's defence. For it is only a short while since luscious Lisa was to be found generously showing Andrew Neill the sights of her home town, Dublin. But in his latest column there's not a single reference to his 6ft 2in blonde friend's survival. Most unchivalrous!

'The Marquesa'

CURIOUS goings-on at the Howe Barracks in Canterbury following the Ministry of Defence decision to privatise Army residential quarters.

Army families living in the barracks have been unable to establish what is going to happen to them after privatisation. Infuriated, they arranged for local journalists to meet them and their MP, Julian Brazier, to air some of their concerns.

The hacks duly arrived with Brazier - only to be greeted by an embarrassed silence. The MoD had put out that families were not allowed to talk to the media. If they did it could have an adverse effect on their menfolks' careers. This enraged Brazier. He was only mollified when Defence Secretary Michael Portillo agreed that they should be allowed to speak. The families were still reluctant, however — pointing out that as the Ministry would monitor who was saying what, nothing had really changed.

The families' chief concern — which the media were embargoed from reporting — is security. They fear that allowing private security firms and contractors in will lead to security breaches. They are also worried that flogging off surplus properties on the open market could let lunatics or even terrorists into their midst.

Although Portillo has gone on record saying that this will not be the case, families fear that officials have not thought the implications of privatisation through. The fundamental security questions remain unaddressed.

IT WOULD appear that Sir Jammy Fishpaste's increasingly absurd Referendum Party — like the Foreign Legion — is none too particular when it comes to signing up new recruits.

Fishcake had, according to *The Times* (August 12), achieved something of a coup with his latest signing. Ian Beaumont is to be the chief press officer, following a career which included seven years at No 10 with both Thatch and Major and, most recently, typing press releases for Knacker of the Yard.

Curiously, not included on his CV is Beaumont's unsuccessful application for Joy Johnson's old job as broadcasting officer for the Labour Party, a position which requires all serious candidates to be fully paid-up party members. Presumably the wily old financier has employed Beaumont for his ability to see both sides of the argument.

JUNIOR minister Andrew Mitchell, who rebuked MPs for laying down parliamentary questions about the Child Support Agency, would have done better to berate the Agency itself, as it seems incapable of providing MPs with accurate answers.

Liberal Democrat MP Liz Lynne asked the CSA via the social security secretary to provide a technical table of "requirement to co-operate decisions". The CSA willingly provided the figures but a month later was apologising after another Lynne question pointed out that the figures provided did not add up.

"I do apologise that having looked again at the totals detailed for the RBD section of the tables... I can see that they were wrong," wrote Ann Chant, chief executive of the CSA.

One month on, another Lynne question about how the figures add up and another admission from Chant: "I can see that for the second time they [the figures] include an error." How can Mitchell censure MPs for pointing out such incompetence?

Meanwhile EDS, the computer giant which runs the CSA's disastrous computer systems, is still taking over government contracts at an alarming rate. It has just notched up another massive £40m contract with the Ministry of Defence to run an RAF system.

THE PLAN proposed by PowerGen last week to build a wind farm at sea off Norfolk was spelt out at the Sizewell B inquiry in 1984 by one of the objectors.

It was rejected with contempt by the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB), which explained why a nuclear power station at Sizewell was a far cheaper way of getting electricity. This was accepted by the learned judge, Sir Frank Layfield, who presided, and his financial assessor, Sir Christopher Foster of Coopers and Lybrand (see *Eyes* passim).

Sizewell B was duly built at a cost of £2bn, double the number they first thought of, and the government has just tried, and failed, to sell it to the City at a knock-down price (£1.4bn in a package including all the other modern nuclear power stations).

MORE news of Martin "Trainspotter" Potter, the former Young Conservatives chairman chosen by the Tories to fight Tony Benn in Chesterfield.

While the anorak-wearing right-winger enthusiastically canvasses his prospective constituents, Labour supporters need only point to Potter's previous attempts at propaganda in *The Torch*, a Federation of Conservative Students magazine, to improve Benn's chances of a landslide victory.

In *The Torch*'s first issue in 1987, Potter penned an article headed "South Africa, a personal view" in which he advanced the case that "mutual separation is the most prosperous means of advancing". In the process of this forward-thinking article, Trainspotter managed an incredible 12 spelling mistakes and numerous grammatical errors. Evidently another Tory intellectual heavyweight.

"Careful, it produces a strong recoil"

LABOUR'S' spokesman on legal affairs, Paul Boateng, still manages to practise as a barrister, squeezing in cases around the parliamentary schedule. With his political arguments for reforms of the legal system and improved rights for clients, Boateng undoubtedly gives his clients a splendid deal.

In one recent case in Maidstone Crown Court Boateng was one of five barristers defending the accused in a drug importation case.

After nine weeks of the jury trial, Boateng suddenly offered evidence which implicated another defendant. That defendant's barrister was shocked by Boateng's about-turn.

After plenty of legal quarrels, the judge immediately discharged the jury and declared that the case must be retried.

So Labour's spokesman on legal affairs had helped to waste £2m of legal fees, not to mention the costs of the court proceedings borne by the taxpayer. The jurymen had nine weeks of their time wasted. All concerned were mightily peeved with New Labour's great legal reformer.

WHEN the government decided to privatise Belfast International Airport (a vital trade route which handles the Royal Mail, daily newspapers and other valuable cargo contracts, as well as passenger services) one of the reasons given for selling to a management-led buy-out consortium was that control of the airport would remain in Northern Ireland.

Now, less than two years on, the managers who paid the government just £32.75m for their business have decided that local control isn't all it's cracked up to be and have gratefully agreed to be taken over for £72.4m cash, plus the repayment of around £30m in outstanding loans, bringing the purchase price up above the £100m mark.

Directors who invested £50,000 per head at privatisation collect a reasonable £6m each, which is a slightly better return than you'd get from a building society account (or, indeed, from buying the equivalent amount of lottery tickets).

New owners TBI, a Welsh property company which saw its profits increase by 146 per cent last year, have already picked up Cardiff Airport and are — understandably — on the lookout for any further airports that the government or local authorities might feel like selling before Blair takes over.

THE first rumblings of discontent are sounding from the newest super-quango, the Environment Agency. Before the Agency had even opened its chairman, Baron de Ramsay, and chief executive, Ed Gallagher, had become known as "Laurel and Hardy" for their amusing antics.

First there was the sacking of 1200 staff from the National Rivers Authority before its merger into the EA. Then there was the *Eye* revelation that De Ramsay still held shares in a water company — not that this would affect his judgement in environmental rulings, of course.

Now staff from the old HM Inspectorate of Pollution and former senior county waste regulators, both now merged with the EA, have seen proposals for their pay to be cut by up to 20 per cent, at a time when their responsibilities are rapidly expanding.

Experienced pollution inspectors are already leaving to avoid a drop in salary. Britain's polluting industries will be delighted to find that they are facing new, less experienced site inspectors who are willing to put up with the squeezed pay levels.

'Backbiter'

JOHN KENT PRESENTS
JOHN MAJOR'S SENSATIONAL BIG TOP CIRCUS & MENAGERIE
THE EYES HAVE IT
BRILLIANT! WHO ELSE IS DANGEROUS AND HAS MAD EYES?
NEW LABOUR NEW DANGER

NOOKS and CORNERS

IT CAN be done. When, at the beginning of this century, what became the City branch of the Northern Line wanted to build a new station near the Bank of England, it proposed to sacrifice the church of St Mary Woolnoth. But there were protests at such gratuitous vandalism and, in the event, a station concourse and its entrances were tucked neatly under Hawksmoor's masterpiece; it stands yet. The other early Tube lines were similarly tactful; corner buildings were removed to make way for those ruby-red tiled Underground stations designed by Leslie Green, but efforts were made to minimise the damage to the fabric of London.

Not so these days. A century later, engineering is so much more sophisticated that massive cleared sites are required for the work. The initial proposals for Crossrail envisaged the clearance of great swathes of property either to make way for stations or just to facilitate the tunnelling. And now the Docklands Light Railway wants to demolish a huge chunk of the centre of Greenwich.

The plan is to extend the DLR's childish and ramshackle line from the Isle of Dogs south to Lewisham by tunnelling under the Themes. Nothing wrong with that, of course, nor with the sensible proposal to open a "Cutty Sark" station across the river in Greenwich. A new station building could be erected on the corner of Creek Road and Greenwich Church Street, right in the heart of things. But no: much more must go. Because, thanks to our car-obsessed government, there is so little money for this potentially useful addition to London's transport infrastructure, the DLR — abetted by the London Borough of Greenwich — now proposes to redevelop a large site to help finance the work.

Greenwich remains one of the glories of London, and the joy of the place is that beyond the great classical monuments — Inigo Jones's Queen's House, Wren's Royal Hospital and Hawksmoor's parish church — and despite the earlier clearance of houses around the *Cutty Sark* itself — the fabric of the place is modest in scale, charming and largely untouched. The central rectangular core, with the market in the centre, is formed by stuccoed Regency buildings while ordinary Georgian houses make up most of the surrounding streets. This is not "heritage", but real London, with properly shabby buildings housing a variety of useful shops. But not for much longer if Greenwich's Labour councillors have their way. They have already emptied Waldron House, an Edwardian block, by offering cash inducements to the ethnic tenants.

Four strategic buildings have already been acquired by the DLR; other properties are on short leases and are threatened with compulsory purchase. Many of the buildings are ordinary Georgian and not listed, although the house above the eel and pie shop dates from the 17th century. But the point is that together they make up a special piece of real London and that if they are swept away, much of the life will go from Greenwich as well as much of its architectural character. The DLR would like to start the work of destruction in October. The borough has stated that, to speed things up, demolition may have to precede the granting of detailed planning permission. As for the proposed replacement, no plans have yet been published but it is unlikely that the "Cutty Sark Centre" will add much to the architectural interest of Greenwich.

There is a worse scenario: that the Docklands Light Railway is never built, but an attractive development site is created none the less. Now that couldn't possibly happen, could it?

IN THE last issue I discussed how English Heritage was assisting the IRA in its mission to bring the City of London into the new millennium by getting rid of historic buildings like the old Baltic Exchange. Now the 1992 bomb that did for the Exchange also badly damaged the medieval church of St Helen, off Bishopsgate. This, of course, was a God-given opportunity to allow the rector, Prebendary "Dick" Lucas, and his well-heeled, happy-clappy congregation to clear out a lot of old tat and make the place into a nice modern auditorium.

After a Consistory Court hearing in 1993, God's (and the Barclay Brothers') Own Architect, Mr Quinlan Terry was given leave to change the floor levels and discard all the pieces of old furniture and Anglo-Catholic idolatry that gave St Helen's any interest or character** (Eye 812). **The only sop given to the sentimental conservationists who tried to do the Devil's work and halt this modern Dowsing was that the Late Victorian reredos designed by Pearson had to be retained.

But where is the reredos now? It is not in the church. Inquires elicited the information that it was removed from St Helen's "for repair", but that was more than three years ago. Clearly the rector has no intention of having the wretched thing back. So is Miss Sheila Cameron, QC, Chancellor of the Diocese of London, going to enforce her judgement, or will St Helen's be allowed to treat ecclesiastical law as well as ecclesiastical architecture with contempt?

'Piloti'

We are happy to welcome Dawn Eagle Woman back to Scotland for a ten day visit. She will be accompanied by her husband Brian, an honorary Medicine Man of the Hopi Tribe.

Dawn Eagle Woman combines the wisdom of native American teachings with her own personal experience of spirit. At the age of 25 Dawn's hands were activated by a near death experience. She clears energy cords and emphasises personal responsibility, enabling us to loosen ties that bind us to habitual patterns throughout many life times.

On this trip the focus of her work will be about opening to our deepest yearning, connecting us to our heart's desire.

Advertisement

Out and about on general wander, Thursday for the Friday feelin' seem somewhat stagnant. The White Room and Mosquito Court both quiet in numbers though tuneful in vibe.

Missionee's patience is once more rewarded as Friday feelin' is now beforen rather than yonda. Journey worth their weight in while.

Preclub cock'n'tale look in on Barhouse. Zenmasters choonin' Friday, Bovril (Babble) Saturday evening service.

Whatever the plan, take a good look around. Sense on in session on vibe.

JOANNA JONES
"Land of Club", Leicester Mercury

Pseuds Corner

The most beautiful moment of my life was when I was in bed and the VC took Saigon and my dad came and woke me up and said "We won".

(She weeps)

JULIE BURCHILL
Guardian

Like the sponge base for one of her famous cakes, Jane Asher has risen well.

SIMON MILLS
Vogue

In Semester One you will be introduced to postmodern culture. You will visit a heritage site and consider the relationship between history and Postmodernity. You will also study a postmodern film. In Semester Two you will be introduced to the ideas of key thinkers who have addressed Postmodernity — Fredric Jameson and Jean-François Lyotard. You will look at sexuality in Postmodernity, analysing how the Women's Movement and Gay and Lesbian Rights Movements have questioned the idea that sexual identity is natural. You will examine social ideas of the 'normal' and the 'natural' and the role of sexuality in the market place, taking examples from fashion, advertising and pornography. You will also read a postmodern feminist novel. In the final part of the module you will look at Postmodernity and the postcolonial. Whereas the history of the West is based on colonial expansion and exploitation, empires have largely come to an end since World War Two. You will question whether colonial values and power have died with them.

BA programme in Cultural Criticism, Centre for Critical and Cultural Theory, University of Wales, Cardiff.

The CD-Rom has become a fetish object in the cult of information, a communion wafer placed in the mouth of the laptop.

JOHN RYLE
Guardian

CONTRIBUTORS: M. McGhie, E. Gittins, Everyone, J. Boston, Gnome, P. Barnes.

£10 paid for entries

MEDIA NEWS

SAY what you like about the Birtian regime at the BBC, at least its ruthless, market-led efficiency drive has done away with costly "jobs for the boys" practices.

Or has it? Leighton Andrews, who rejoices in the modest title of Head of Public Affairs and Worldwide Corporate Affairs, has announced that he is leaving at the end of October to set up his own private consultancy. He will not be directly replaced; instead, the BBC will be hiring an outside consultant — at a suitable private-sector fee — to advise on "corporate communications strategy and issues management".

Who is the lucky consultant? Step forward one Leighton Andrews.

AS PART of the BBC's attempt to secure the renewal of its charter by sucking up to the government, John Birt agreed to flog off the BBC's transmitters to the highest bidder; hopefully by the end of this year, certainly before the general election.

Naturally the consultant-crazed Corporation is incapable of selling the things without outside help, so Lehman Brothers will collect oodles of commission for advising on the sale. One declared bidder is International CableTel, the US company which apart from digging up pavements throughout the UK in order to inflict L!VE tv and Channel One on unenthusiastic viewers, has already bought the former IBA transmitters used to beam ITV and Channel 4 to the public.

Meanwhile the BBC appears determined to sign up for BSkyB's digital blitzkrieg, spurning now apparently doomed attempts by some of the ITV companies (those that don't have shares in Sky) to start an alternative network.

Rupert Murdoch seems certain to completely control access to UK digital transmission from its inception next year. There has been no hint of opposition to either move from Virginia Bottomley, although presumably one day Mrs Culture will explain why such private monopolies are such a good thing. Or perhaps the job will fall to Labour's Jack Cunningham.

CHRIS PARR'S sudden demotion from his job as Head of Drama Series at the BBC followed the revelation that he had taken a personal loan from Eric Abraham, head of independent production company Portobello Productions.

Now Tony Virgo has taken over as Head of Drama, based at Pebble Mill. And what was one of his first commissions in his new post? A second series of the pisspoor cop show *Dalziel and Pascoe* produced by, er, Portobello Productions.

L!VE TV

L!GGERS have seen a return to the good old hospitality days this month, with the launch of Sky's new channels. At the Royal Lancaster hotel, champagne flowed as Sky supremo David Elstein introduced Sky Sports 3 (on air August 16), Sky 2 (from September) and WBTV — The Warner Channel (November 1).

At Quaglino's, there was even more champagne when Stuart Prebble introduced Granada Sky Broadcasting, which goes on air on October 1. Pissed, everyone thought it looked fantastic; sober, and everyone thought they had seen it all before. But, then, they had.

We know from experience that when television executives boast of bringing "new" stuff to the screen, it means one thing: a relaunch of bucketsful more of the old stuff in the hope that viewers won't notice.

The current edition of Sky's *TV Guide* boasts "10 brand new channels on Sky", stuffed with repeats of plenty of old programmes like *Please Sir*, *Classic Coronation Street*, *The Charmer*, *El C.I.D.*, *The Gentle Touch*, *Jeeves and Wooster*, *Within These Walls*, *Family at War*, *Piece of Cake*, *Doctor in Charge*, *A Fine Romance*, *Mixed Blessings*, and the worst series in the history of law drama, *Crown Court*. Viewers will faint at the newness of it all.

Talk TV has come up with the inspirational idea of letting the public have their say. Topical news stories and issues will be debated, possibly in the way that they already are on *Vanessa*, *Donahue*, *Ricki Lake*, *Oprah*, *The Time The Place*, *Kilroy*, *et al.*

Still, at least they have wheeled in some hitherto unknown presenters to give the channel an air of freshness. One Sir David Frost is being tipped for the top. For viewers who might find all this newness a little overwhelming, there will be repeats of the deceased Russell Harty in his talk-show heyday.

The Good Life Channels will feature *TV High Street*, *Food and Wine*, *Health and Beauty*, and *Home and Garden*. That's right! All the things you will also be able to find on *This Morning*, Granada's daily lifestyle show hosted by Richard Madeley and Judy Finnigan.

"There really is something for everyone with Granada's superb mix of seven new channels" says the blurb. Er... no, there's not.

There's nothing for nearly everyone on Sky 2 too, where Sky 1's most popular shows, including *Melrose Place* and *Letterman* (would that be the Letterman who flopped on BBC 2 when he came to Britain to do his show?) are being moved to establish a new audience.

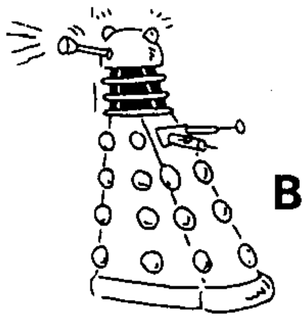
As well as "new", imported dramas ("Cryogenically incarcerated for a crime he didn't commit!" was one breathtaking taster at the launch), there will be more repeats — "old favourites", as they are billed — of imported dramas, like *The X-Files*, currently on air 18 hours a day on every channel.

For children weary of the newness infiltrating their homes, there is plenty for them over on the Warner channel. In another bid to find a million ways to say "same old stuff", Sky promises both "classic and contemporary" animation, drama or comedy.

Sky Sports 3 expands Sky's current 874 hours a month to make an annual grand total of more than 4,000 hours. There is the promise of exciting sports like karting and canoeing, and coverage of "live and exclusive events" or "things you missed earlier". That would be repeats, then?

Of course, there have to be so many repeats because they have no money for genuinely new and original programming, poor lambs. Well, not unless you count the £3 increase subscribers are going to have to pay each month. New debt, new depths.

'William McTelly'



BIRTSPEAK

MARKETING "experts" at Television Centre have unveiled the BBC Club's exciting new logo to an audience of nobody at all. Combining the words "BBC" and "Club" and using the novel approach of placing one next to the other, the design was ridiculed immediately by Club members sadly ignorant of advanced marketing techniques. A damage-limitation exercise followed in the BBC's staff newspaper *Pravda*, sorry, *Ariel*, as managers attempted to justify the vast outlay of licence-payers' dosh.

Club chairman Bernard Buist explained the "BBC" and "Club" strategy: "We wanted to develop a single strong identity which all our members and activity sections could readily associate with. Our new streamlined logo has been designed to suit our progressive new image. It communicates exactly who we are — 'BBC Club'."

Alas, the Corporation is about to change its own main logo, "so it can be used as a true 'unifying symbol' across all departments and services". This means that the Club will have to think again about its exciting "concept".

Logo fans, however, will have to wait for some time to enjoy the unification experience of a "strong, universally applied brand identity". The new logo "will be applied gradually — as and when new stationery is ordered, for example, or as and when vehicles need replacing or refurbishing", said Jane Frost, head of Corporate and Brand Marketing — mindful, perhaps, of all those newly printed Club brochures.

out of their Minds
A GHOSTLY GREY FIGURE...
OF LITTLE SUBSTANCE...
HAUNTS AN OLD HOUSE...
FRIGHTENING EVERYBODY...
WITH NO LOGICAL EXPLANATION...
AS TO WHY HE SHOULD BE THERE

"I know you find it useful, Cap'n Toothbrush, but you were much scarier when you had the hook"

THE Northern Ireland peace process has taken a dramatic turn, with the Republican movement claiming that the makers of *Star Trek* have endorsed Sinn Fein's final victory.

Having heard that the vicious colonial oppressors at the BBC had refused to transmit two episodes of *Star Trek — The Next Generation* for fear of offending Unionists, Republicans obtained the relevant videos from American sympathisers and have now put them on public show in Belfast.

In the first episode a colony of leprechaun-like Irish stereotypes colonises a vacant planet — it's life Gerry, but not as we know it. In the second, Data reveals that according to the *USS Enterprise*'s computer files, the space colony was established only after Ireland itself was reunited back in 2024 (earth years). Obviously the BBC's refusal to broadcast these vital episodes is symptomatic of the censorship culture imposed by the occupying forces. In between street protests, the balaclavaed ones are now eagerly scanning tapes of *Lou Grant*, following rumours that the grizzled TV hack endorses their cause in a similarly unbroadcast episode.

CONGRATULATIONS to the *Sunday Times* for its brilliant scoop last weekend which revealed that a London University academic, Dr Georgina Born, was carrying out an "anthropological study" of the warring tribes within the BBC. The story of Dr Born's research project first appeared in the *Eye* as long ago as October 1995.

Coming soon in the *Sunday Times*: "EXCLUSIVE — HITLER TO INVADE POLAND."

LUVVIES

A letter from his manager asked that he be "treated and respected as if Michael was Dame Judi Dench".

About MICHAEL FLATLEY
('Riverdance' and 'Lord of the Dance' star)
Sunday Times

Submitted by Francis Harvey

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

WORLD OF MAGAZINES

STAFF at lad mag *Loaded* find editorial inspiration in all sorts, even snorts, of sources. The porn (phwoaarrr), Britpop records and loads of booze are a big help, of course — but on a tiring day the lads are also fond of a reviving dose of old-fashioned smelling salts!

Such is the pressure of work on the top-selling mag, however, that the staff rarely have time to pop out to the local chemist's. Instead they have been using a local taxi firm to pick up their "jollies", as they amusingly call it, from a private supplier. This neat set-up was abruptly ended when the cab drivers concerned found out what the "urgent copy" they were delivering to *Loaded* really was.

One driver came into the office and confronted the quavering heroes of lad culture, threatening to take a baseball bat to them and the office.

The brave staff have now found a new taxi company to bring their much-needed doses of creativity to their doorstep.

"There but for the grace of God..."

FOCUS ON THE WORLD SERVICE

EVERY hour, on the hour, anywhere around the world, a shortwave radio will pick out a calm, confident voice declaring: "This is London." There follow the reassuring refrain of "Lillibullero", some pips, and the words: "0800 hours GMT. BBC World Service. The news, read by..."

The tone is familiar, traditional and famously old-fashioned: no soundbites, no instant analysis, not a hint of sensationalism — the news, from the four corners of the globe, in less than 10 minutes. Nothing more, nothing less.

Listeners in some 40 languages love it: Somalia grinds to a halt at five o'clock every afternoon; Burmese opposition leader and Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi swears by it. UN officials, government ministers and rebel commanders in a dozen trouble spots constantly call in with requests to be interviewed.

Care, caution, concern to be right rather than first and a stubborn interest in places like Chechnya or Rwanda were the values which made the BBC the best-known and most trusted name in international broadcasting.

And now, so the *Guardian* and a demoralised workforce at World Service headquarters at Bush House would have it, 60 years of achievement is being compromised by a BBC management obsessed with television and commercialism. How could John Birt squander such a priceless asset?

Not so fast. Things are far from well at the World Service, nor have they been for quite some time. Our once noble if old fashioned institution has been brought to its knees not only by Armani-clad colleagues, nor by government cuts. The enemy is also within: our own, arrogantly piss-poor Bush House management.

Our managing director Sam Younger and the editor of news and current affairs, Bob Jobbins, were the last to know but among the first to welcome the recent changes, which amount to an end to a proud history of independence from the more parochial concerns of our domestic colleagues.

With sorrow but no surprise, we saw our champions secure their own jobs before selling us and our values down the river. Sad experience has taught to expect no more from a team which includes in Ian Hoare, our news supremo, a man whose editorial concerns rarely stretch beyond an obsessive interest in Ugandan affairs.

Our new number one at newsgathering, Kevin Sampson, most recently had to consult the index to check where exactly in the atlas he could find Burundi.

Days after last month's coup there, he famously overruled an exclusive report of an army massacre filed by one of his own correspondents in a favour of a denial — subsequently withdrawn — from a notoriously untrustworthy military spokesman.

Our thoughts are also with Sampson's sidekick Nick Nugent, known affectionately as "huge cunt", whose recent successes include making our Kabul reporter buy his own flak jacket.

The old generation of subs and duty editors, eccentric in their drinking habits, certainly, but passionately committed to careful writing and the cautious values on which people in a hundred countries could once take for granted, has passed.

The few who remain struggle with clueless hacks anxious to get out of Bush House and into television or domestic radio; with some horror an urgent correction was recently made to a bulletin of South American news which had inexplicably included a story on the obscure but nevertheless distinctly African country of Equatorial Guinea.

So in place of that fussy old obsession with accuracy, impartiality and accessibility, our World Service management, distinguished only by its own mediocrity and incompetence, has followed slavishly any fad emerging from Broadcasting House with barely a thought for what our audience demands or our slender resources will permit.

Embarrassment over recent news specials — most infamously our current affairs coverage of May's Israeli elections which included hours of tortured analysis of a Peres second term before it emerged that actually, er, Netanyahu had won — mingles with fear and gloom over Jobbins's insane plan for a dedicated 24-hour rolling world news service.

With correspondents already struggling to complete endless rounds of identical interviews with woefully ill-informed presenters, while simultaneously collecting more Five Live style clips of babies crying, the old hands shake their heads at the final victory of style over content. We hear the sneers of the complacent new guard ringing loud in our ears as what they term "our product" becomes ever more ordinary.

We mourn only the passing from our control of our flagship fledgling television service, which so raised our spirits by accidently including footage of Afghan rebels in a report on Sri Lanka, and later spiced up a report on poverty in the south of Italy by helpfully emptying rubbish bins and placing syringes on the street before filming.

Nevertheless, as we wait to see how many of us must make way for the huge savings now demanded, it is relief indeed to know that those now making their way from Bush House into the brave new corporate world are so very good at what they do that there was no need even for them to be interviewed.

Meanwhile, ex-governors like Marmaduke Hussey and P.D. James are telling everyone how annoyed they are with Birt's plans. A touch late, after years of stupidity — but perhaps it shows that the public protest is finally getting through. Apparently the World Service row is *so* serious that this year it "quite ruined the Governors' Glyndebourne".

HITS & HITMEN

BORIS JOHNSON, who somehow manages to hold down a job as political pundit for the *Daily Telegraph* while simultaneously being a prospective Tory MP, has revealed another side to his multi-faceted character: he is addicted to the crime novels of Carl Hiaasen.

"In his sympathetic villains, Hiaasen has hit on a truth which eludes other crime writers: that criminals are basically inept and absurd," Boris explained in Monday's *Telegraph*. "His works are moral, mind you, and the victims are punished. But each come-uppance is carefully calibrated."

Oddly, Boris neglected to mention his own expertise in this field, through his close friendship with convicted fraudster Darius Guppy — a man for who the adjectives "inept" and "absurd" might have been specially invented. *Eye* readers may recall the notorious "Johnson tapes" in which Darius could be heard begging Boris to provide him with the home address of Stuart Collier, a *News of the World* reporter who had offended him. Boris was happy to cooperate: "OK Darrie, I said I'd do it and I'll do it." However, he did insist that the hapless *Screws* hack shouldn't be maimed for life by Guppy's hitmen — merely knocked about a bit. Like his hero Carl Hiaasen, Boris is clearly a firm believer in the carefully calibrated come-uppance.

SIGNAL FAILURES

A DECISION in the coming months on the sale of the Porterbrook train leasing company to Stagecoach could completely alter the course of rail privatisation.

On the face of it, the sale would be beneficial, as it would remove one of the many bureaucratic tiers created by privatisation. But Stagecoach would then have rival bus operator National Express by the short and curlies. All the trains used by National Express on its Midland Main Line and Gatwick Express franchises are owned by Porterbrook. National Express would not be able to lease trains from elsewhere because there are none available.

Stagecoach is bidding for most of the franchises yet to be awarded. Owning trains could give it a significant advantage over other bidders, especially as the rolling stock companies are not regulated. Stagecoach (a firm which has spent the last 10 years fighting what little regulation remains in the bus industry) has offered to regulate itself if it takes over Porterbrook. This is the Stagecoach that squeezed out Darlington's local bus firm by running free services and poaching drivers (*Eyes passim*) and which last year broke the record for references to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

The rail regulator has asked rail businesses for their views. He could decide to pass the matter on to the Office of Fair Trading, who could pass it on to the President of the Board of Trade (not the Transport Secretary), who could pass it on to the MMC, who could block the deal.

The outcome will be crucial. The government did not expect rail businesses to buy up other rail businesses so soon and its chosen structure for the privatised railway assumes a wide spread of ownership. If the merger goes ahead, the other two leasing companies created by the sale of BR's trains could soon be snapped up by other franchise operators and three huge companies would then slog it out in the market for train operation.

This is exactly what has happened in the bus industry, where the government expected a wide spread of ownership after deregulation in 1986. Bus travel has been decreasing for decades, while rail travel has held its own. Anything which emulates the bus industry's success in generating greater demand for car travel will be applauded by the government's mates in the road lobby.

CROSSRAIL, the London rail project that has had more false starts than Linford Christie, is still swallowing millions of pounds a year — even though there is no prospect of it ever being built.

A rail tunnel linking suburban lines in the Liverpool Street area with others in the Paddington area was "announced" in the late 1980s by Cecil Parkinson, then transport secretary. Since then Crossrail has been "announced" several times, usually as a morale booster at Tory party conferences, but it has never obtained Parliamentary approval, let alone the £1.8bn capital it needs.

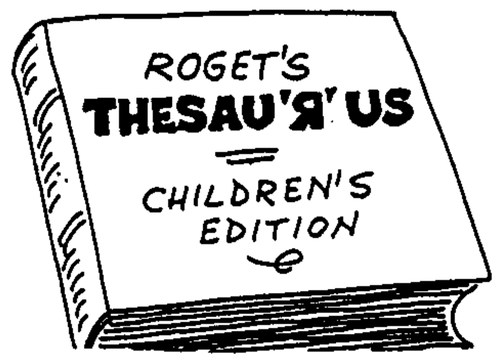
Since 1990, £135m of public money has been spent on preparatory work for Crossrail. This year London Underground has £14m for the same purpose, and £12m is expected to be spent in each of the following two years. "Although it's dead, because of the amount of work and money that was spent on it we have to keep it on the back burner on a low heat in case it's ever resurrected," said a spokesman for LU. "The figures are for consultancy fees just to keep it on the boil."

The Department of Transport said: "The government hasn't formally said no to Crossrail but in terms of available finance it will have to take its turn."

Crossrail is behind Thameslink 2000 in the investment queue. Thameslink 2000 is a similar but cheaper scheme on a north-south axis. It will not be finished until 2002.

The saga is typical of Tory Britain. Other countries get on with things; Britain prefers to announce things and pay consultants to consider the possibility of getting on with them.

'Dr B. Ching'



UNIVERSITY NEWS

MORE on Wafic Said, the wealthy businessman and broker in the Al Yamamah arms deal with philanthropic plans for an Oxford University business school.

Eye 904 pointed out that the city centre site picked out by the university executive would prove unpopular with local residents and the city council, which has designated it an open space.

But there are other reasons why Said may not get his prime site. The location chosen for the business school was part of the Holywell Estate, which was the property of Merton College since its foundation and had been part of the college's playing fields for many years.

In 1964 Merton agreed to sell the site to the university on the understanding that the recommendations made in a report on the site's development by Sir William Holford would be accepted. Holford had written in his report in the *University Gazette* in 1963 that "the remainder of the field [the site for Said's school] should be added to the green belt or by some other means kept in perpetuity as open space."

He continued: "It could, I suggest, suitably be regarded as part of the University Parks."

Holford's recommendations were voted on by the University's Congregation in 1964 and adopted (235 votes in favour and 22 against). Two previous attempts by the university to develop the land, in 1966 and 1967, were vetoed by Merton College.

DOWN ON THE FARM

TO DEMONSTRATE its vigilance in protecting us from BSE, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has in its new, quarterly *BSE Enforcement Bulletin* named the "criminal" butchers who have broken the BSE rules. First on the list are Peter and Richard Baker, who own a butchers shop with a small slaughterhouse attached. After Maffia vets found "specified bovine offal" (SBO) in a bin with some sheep offal in the slaughterhouse, only a small part of which had been stained as the regulations require, they were fined £5,000.

But if the Bakers deserve to be put so publicly in the stocks for their heinous crime, what of the Meat Hygiene Service and its 1,000-plus officials who enforce the SBO controls? When state vets caught out the Bakers and others, they also fingered 22 MHS officials who had failed to do their jobs properly. Not least of their "offences" was stamping carcasses as "fit for human consumption" which still had potentially infective spinal cord material sticking to them.

Although one of these officials was dismissed, 12 received formal disciplinary warnings and nine were issued with written cautions, not one was prosecuted. All bar one were allowed back on the job, to receive their handsome salaries while being "retrained". Not that any of these details grace the "enforcement bulletin".

This, presumably, is because the bulletin, according to a gushing editorial by junior agriculture minister, Angela "Goldilocks" Browning, aims to give consumers "the information to demonstrate publicly that the job is being done properly". Understandably, information on how the job is being fouled up by the officials would be less than welcome.

Nevertheless, we would sleep that much more soundly in our beds if we knew the Maffia was spending less on compiling this sort of naff, one-sided propaganda, and a little more on getting the job right. In the interests of fairness, should not the guilty officials be named in the next edition of the "enforcement bulletin"?

IF THERE is ever another animal disease crisis even approaching the scale of BSE — not forgetting that an *E. coli* outbreak might be just round the corner (*Eye*, 904) — at the cutting edge of the battle to contain the illness will be little-known branch of the Maffia called the Veterinary Investigation Service. This provides specially trained vets, scientists and laboratories through a national network of 17 veterinary investigation centres.

Such is the commitment of this government to "doing the job properly" in protecting human and animal health that, in addition to cutting £10m from the VIS budget last year, it has just come back for another £500,000, trimming a further 20 scientific posts from the national establishment. Coverage is now dangerously stretched, particularly in Wales, where the Aberystwyth centre has been reduced to a skeleton staff.

All this is happening while the government is adding £15m to the funds of the MHS, which already extracts £35m a year from the meat industry. This is to finance another 300 more officials to look at dead cows to see if any spinal cord is present — after they have already been inspected by another set of MHS officials for the same purpose.

But this is peanuts compared with the estimated £2.4bn being wasted on incinerating the remains of more than a million healthy cattle each year for the next three years, implementing the so-called "cattle destruction scheme". However, if even a fraction of that money was spent on the VIS, the government would be in grave danger of "doing the job properly". That, of course, would never do — far better to publish yet another vacuous "enforcement bulletin".

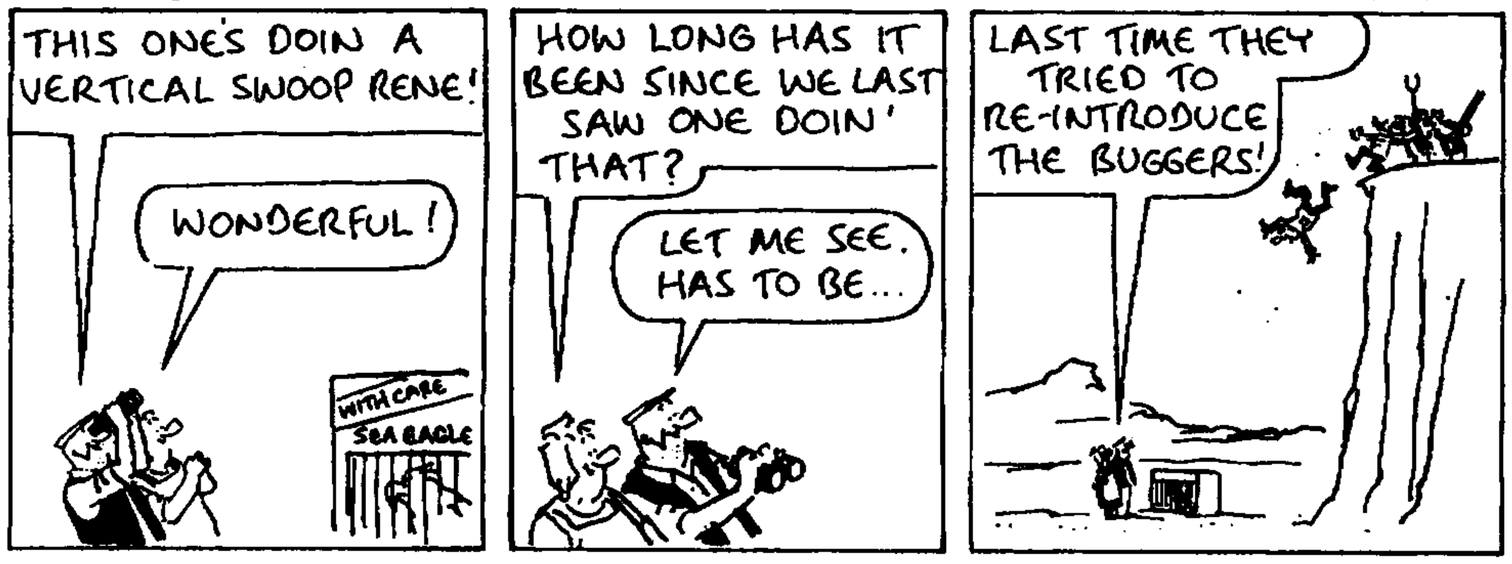
MUCH pride has been expressed by all concerned in the commissioning of a new £3.5m high-tech salad production plant in Selsey, West Sussex, built in co-operation with the Tesco supermarket group. The plant is to process the lettuces grown on 2,000 acres of farmland owned and run by the Langmead family.

So proud of their achievement are the Langmeads and Tesco that the launch has been given full-page coverage in the NFU's *Southern Farmer* magazine. Top of the page is a photograph of a massive tractor sprayer, traversing a monstrous flat field, saturating regular lines of lettuces with poisonous chemicals, all set against a hedgeless and treeless landscape, totally denuded of natural cover.

Needless to say, the name of this bucolic enterprise is "Nature's Way Foods".

'New Muckspreader'

Old Macdonald


THIS ONE'S DOIN A VERTICAL SWOOP RENE!
WONDERFUL!
WITH CARE
SEA EAGLE
HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE WE LAST SAW ONE DOIN' THAT?
LET ME SEE. HAS TO BE...
ALBERT
LAST TIME THEY TRIED TO RE-INTRODUCE THE BUGGERS!

THE Rotten Borough Advertiser

Friday, 23 August, 1996

TROTTER MAKES HACKNEY TOTTER

THE Mark Trotter/AIDS scandal is about to bring down the entire Hackney Labour regime. Just before Trotter, a former Hackney children's home officer, died of AIDS last year, he wrote out a list of names, including several well-known figures in Hackney, which he made sure would be well circulated in town hall circles.

What is this list, and why are these people on it? No one seems to know. It was almost certainly *written* with *malicious intent* and any allegations it contains may well be unfounded.

But Labour's national executive, tiring of the huge embarrassment the Hackney saga has already caused to the party, wants to see the backs of many of the borough's senior Labour figures — not least Labour group leader Nick Tallentire.

Despite Hackney's claims that they have acted responsibility over this sleazy business the fact remains that many of Hackney's ruling Labour councillors knew of suspicions about Trotter's paedophiliac predilections. Yet he was allowed to carry on working with children.

- In 1984 Hackney received a complaint from Liverpool, where Trotter used to work, about the way he had sexually propositioned a little girl. The council investigated the matter but let Trotter continue working with children.
- In 1986 there were allegations about Trotter's relationships with children in his care at the Trowbridge home in Hackney. Once again the council investigated. Unfortunately they have no record of the findings.
- In the early 1990s Labour councillors approved the appointment of Trotter as chairman of the governors at a local nursery school.
- Last summer Inspector Knacker of the Merseyside police contacted Hackney regarding a Liverpool paedophile ring. A long — but inconclusive — council investigation into whether Trotter was linked with the ring was conducted by Hackney's former Family and Children's manager, Len Redley.

Next under the spotlight: allegations that Hackney has been paying former residents of the Trowbridge home, where Trotter worked, £2,000 each to keep quiet.

CARR FOR THE COURSE

NOW that Preston has finished its recent farcical investigation into alleged sexual harassment among its top executives (*Eye* 904) the council can get on with the important business of sorting out the appalling mess caused by the Operation Angel property scam. The harassment allegations were the latest desperate attempt to put up a smokescreen to take attention away from Operation Angel — but council leaders know they can't delay much longer.

A soon-to-be-published report from auditors KPMG has revealed a Lambeth-like catalogue of bureaucratic cock-ups and financial losses totalling several million pounds: officials broke agreed rules and procedures in handing out lucrative development contracts, set up fiefdoms where they ran council business unchecked, and allowed valuable sites to be sold off to developers cut-price.

Acting town clerk Jim Carr now has to decide whether the council should sue former deputy leader Frank McGrath over alleged losses of £250,000 from one docklands deal. McGrath received £115,000 from Balfour Beatty after entering into an agreement to develop a property on Clifton Drive North, a pecuniary "arrangement" which he didn't declare as an interest with the council. McGrath also paid for a fellow councillor, John Monk, to go on holiday with his wife to Acapulco in April 1990. Monk was recently suspended from the town hall Labour group while his financial affairs were investigated. He has just been cleared by an internal Labour tribunal, as everybody expected.

But Carr is in a dilemma. If he chooses to proceed with the case against McGrath he will find Preston's Labour leaders rounding on him and forcing him out. If he decides not to go ahead, or continues to procrastinate, he will be seen as a weak and lose councillors' respect. If he chooses to sue — and Preston loses — it could cost the taxpayer around £500,000 in damages.

MUM'S THE WORD

THE ascetic socialism of Birmingham councillor Theresa Stewart was once regarded as an example to all. So pure were her ideals that colleagues christened her "Mother" Theresa.

Mother Theresa's purity won her such popularity that she was elected Labour group leader. She had promised that her elevation would usher in a brave new world in which democracy reigned and the many left-wingers who had spent years with her in Birmingham's political wilderness would at last be heeded.

The first to benefit was councillor Bill Gray, who was suffering from stress after his own unsuccessful bid for the leadership. Mother had the answer: a brief period off the council would do him the world of good! Gray represented Nechells, one of several city wards frozen by the party's national executive and therefore controlled by regional officers. Mother had a quiet word with Fiona Gordon at the West Midlands regional office.. Within weeks Gray had been deselected. When Gray stubbornly tried to get back on the list of council candidates, his Labour party membership was withdrawn.

Mother has continued to try to do good. Recently, Doug McCarrick, a fellow left-winger and former close friend, announced in *Tribune* that he was considering running against her for the leadership. Mother realised that he, too, was suffering from overwork and consulted once again with regional officers. A few weeks later McCarrick, who represented Small Heath, another of the frozen wards, was deselected. He is now taking a rest from politics, gratefully aware that he owes it all to Mother.

RED FACE OF THE WEEK

THOUSANDS of families in South Wales have received a letter from Bridgend County Borough Council which contains 22 spelling and grammatical mistakes, ranging from the mis-spelt "subseqently" to mixed-up tenses and incorrect use of capital letters. Needless to say, the letter came from the education department.

IN BRIEF

BASINGSTOKE: Councillor Tony Tilbury has had his shotgun licence revoked following an incident in which he spotted a young woman pulling up garden canes on a verge near his house and began remonstrating with her. As he described to magistrates: "My pyjama flies fell open and I fell on top of her. I rang the police and reported myself for possible indecent exposure and technical assault." Suppressing guffaws, magistrates fined Tilbury £5 — about the smallest penalty possible. He has not resigned as a councillor.

CAMDEN: Chief executive Steve Bundred aims to transform his borough from "a slumbering giant" to "a place for everyone, a place to live, a place for enjoyment, a place which cares". Alas there is no place in Bundred's carey-sharey Camden for local newspapers which are occasionally critical of the council. Accordingly the free *Camden New Journal* has been banned from all council-owned property.

LEEDS: The city council generously gave £70,000 of council tax payers' money to the Ramgarhia Board Sikh Temple. Inspector Knacker is now investigating reports of rival factions at the temple fighting with knuckle dusters and iron bars. Further council grants have been suspended, as the temple has failed to submit audited accounts for six years.

MANCHESTER: Eager to tempt people back to their bombed-out shopping centre, the council has placed ads in local papers carrying a photo captioned: "Enjoy your shopping trip to Manchester city centre, where more traders are opening up after the bomb." The picture shows a group of youngsters out enjoying the sunshine on a tree-lined esplanade. Alas, the picture was taken not in sunny Manchester, but in rainy Barcelona. The stunt would have been more convincing had Manchester not felled most of its city centre trees — to stop bombs being hidden in them.

JUSTICE

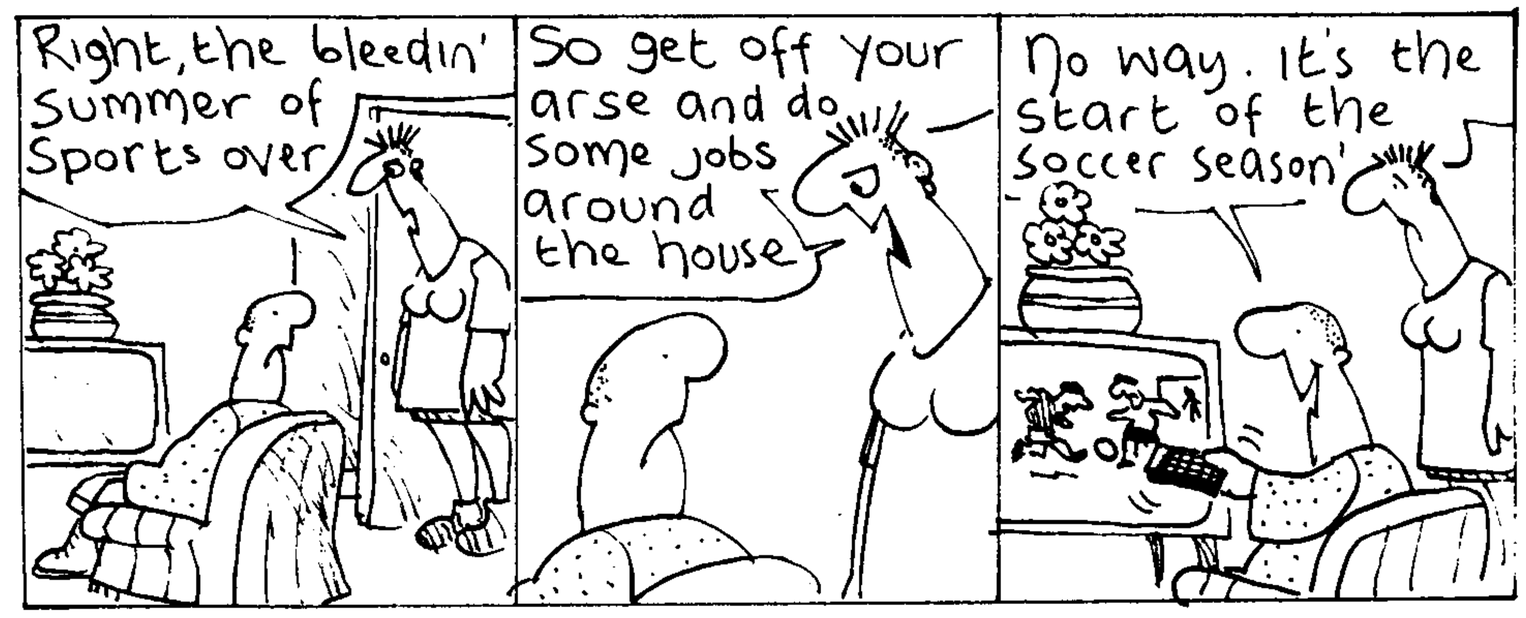
LINDA VARMA'S seven-year-old son Christopher was killed by a motorcyclist who was fined £250 and banned for two years (*Eye* 798). Subsequent witness evidence indicated that the rider, Henry Staals, had been travelling at around 60 miles per hour, not the 22 mph to 38 mph suggested in court.

Mrs Varma believes this sort of miscarriage of justice should be as possible to reverse as the more sensational ones reported recently.

She wrote to Labour leader Tony Blair requesting a meeting after hearing him pledge Labour to be "tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime". Mrs Varma was surprised to receive only a cursory five sentence letter from the Labour leader. It did not even reply to her request for a meeting, despite his declarations that "New Labour will be an advocate of human rights".

YOBS

HUSBAND


Right, the bleedin' Summer of Sports over
So get off your arse and do some jobs around the house
No way. It's the start of the soccer season'

DOING THE ROUNDS

IN FEBRUARY, nurses across the UK were offered a massive 2 per cent pay rise with the promise of locally agreed performance-related top-ups. Six months later, just under half the trusts have still to make an offer, preferring to hold on to the money and keep the interest.

Those that have made offers have not gone overboard. **Manchester's Trafford NHS trust** has decided not to top up the 2 per cent at all, **Edinburgh healthcare NHS trust** has offered 0.6 per cent and **Raigmore hospital NHS trust** and **Birmingham's University hospital trust** (BUHT) have pushed the boat out at 0.7 per cent (equivalent to 94p a week for lower paid staff). BUHT have also insisted that staff incorporate two statutory holidays into their annual leave, thus cutting increased pay for bank holiday working. Meanwhile, **Wirral hospital NHS trust** has offered a massive 1 per cent rise — on condition that staff take no more than seven uncertified days off sick a year.

● THE acute shortage of NHS nurses will not be helped by the government's ridiculous decision to prevent overseas nurses with UK training from working in the UK. Since March, the Royal College of Nurses has dealt with "a stream of distraught members" from West Africa, the Indian subcontinent and the Caribbean, who have been refused work permits because they aren't sufficiently specialist. A Malaysian nurse, Vimi Kaur, was offered a job at **West Middlesex University NHS hospital trust** in April after completing her SEN training — but even to be considered for a permit, she would need at least a year's further work experience. Catch 22.

● THE government's dream of moving towards a primary-care led NHS, with nurses taking on much of the work of GPs, will need many more nurses to make it work. Four years ago, 694 nurses registered for health visiting, but only 297 new health visitors have emerged this year. District nurses and school nurses are also down on four years ago, from 623 to 287 and 250 to 58 respectively. How about recruiting some more from overseas?

● A ROYAL College of Nursing survey of 75 casualty departments has revealed that in **London**, the average wait for a bed is seven hours, with departments outside London finding a bed in half the time. Could it just be that there aren't enough beds in the capital? Half the departments admitted that trolley waiting was a common occurrence, with no improvement on 1994, when the survey was last done.

● IS THERE a senior doctor in the house? Not in **East Norfolk**, where only three GPs over the age of 60 are still practising. All the others have taken early retirement. Finding new blood to take over is a problem even in traditionally popular areas. At Haven Health in **Felixstowe**, only one applicant (unsuitable) has responded to advertisements for a new partner since April, and at King Street surgery in **Great Yarmouth** an 18-month search has proved fruitless. Meanwhile, **Sheffield**'s Foxhill medical centre has advertised in *The Big Issue* for a new partner after ads in the medical press proved fruitless.

● THE cash-challenged **Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton health authority** is planning to sell off four local health centres, built with public money in the 1970s. The purchasers are GPs, who will take out a mortgage funded by the health authority. The GPs will be obliged to pay running costs, but will gain a considerable capital asset at no cost. Meanwhile, Queen Mary's hospital in Roehampton is to lose its accident and emergency unit, which treats 41,000 patients a year. Ten per cent of these are seriously ill, and will be expected to travel to Kingston hospital which last winter was, in the words of one of its doctors "stretched to capacity and unable to cope".

● BACK at **Queen Mary's**, the maternity ward canteen keeps running out of food, causing new mothers to go without. As the National Childbirth Trust puts it: "It is fundamental to the health of mothers that they are well fed after birth." I should say.

● REPRESENTATIVES from both **South Norfolk council** and **Norwich City council** have written to dispute MD's allegations of political apathy and

"You must kill yourself"

environmental negligence surrounding the proposed closure of Norwich's two city hospitals, and their replacement with a lesser-bedded hospital in a greenfield site (*Eye* 902). Irene Jacoby, leader of the Liberal Democrat controlled SNC writes: "Here in South Norfolk we take pride in the fact that we are the only council in East Anglia that allows the public to speak directly to the planning committee before decisions are taken... A five-hour planning meeting with 75 minutes public speaking each for protesters and supporters hardly constitutes 'shepherding the proposal through'. There was also a three week public inquiry before the proposal was approved by the Secretary of State in 1988, and a further public inquiry before it was included in our Local Plan. Hardly silence! The (final) decision by members of the committee was taken as always on planning issues on a free vote and approved (19-1) because it accorded with the Local Plan and we are required by law to make planning decisions that do so, and not on the basis of party political policy."

● MEANWHILE Eamonn Burgess, Labour councillor at NCC, was less complimentary about SNC's methods. "The city council was given all of three minutes to put its case to SNC, where we stated our opposition. We are now taking counsel's advice to see if South Norfolk have acted legally, for the reasons you outline. Labour county councillors proposed a strategic objection to the planning approval and the only member of SNC to vote against it was the sole Labour member. Our local Labour MP also appealed to SNC to reconsider just two days before the decision was taken. The irony is, as you point out, that we're all defending Gummer's environmental policies while he and the Tory MP for South Norfolk are flouting them."

LIBRARY NEWS

THE British Library's unpopular chief executive, Dr Brian Lang, sailed through his appearance at the Public Accounts Committee where he was called upon to explain the massive overspend on its move to the St Pancras building. With the help of friendly spokesmen from the Department of Heritage and a specially hired firm of consultants, Lang managed to avoid reprimand.

This has left him free to implement his unpopular restructuring policies which other Library directors have called "unprecedented in their severity" causing "irrevocable damage" to the service the Library offers (See *Eye* 901).

Now Lang has made internal appointments to the reorganised departments. His memo, so banal that it rivals those of BBC boss John Birt, reveals that the "new structure" will have two fewer directorates and in time two more will disappear. This will involve redundancies. Lang ominously advises: "Directors will undertake to ensure that the Trade Union Side is consulted on the further restructuring as appropriate."

Letters

Private Eye

Star Letter

Sir,

We would be most grateful if you would send us a response to the news that PUNCH *is re-launching in September. The first issue has a letters page in need of filling and I am sure you have a view on the matter.*

Yours sincerely,
SUZANNAH HUSEY,
Punch.

Royal standards

Sir,

It is not the Marquesa (EYE *903) who brings pain into the life of Prince Harry. It was Diana, Princess of Wales, who had already delivered it — in full measure — with her ill-considered television interview and her shameful admission of sexual misconduct.*

Such rumours are the obvious result.

Yours faithfully,
MOIRA SAVAGE,
Wallingford, Berks.

Lookalike

North **Clifford**

Sir,

I wonder if any readers have noticed the similarity between Col Oliver "drugs for arms" North and Max "babies for cash" Clifford?

Is there, perhaps, anything that links them other than their ability to strike an "honest" deal?

Yours sincerely,
FRED SCULTHORP (aged 2½),
Twickenham.

Jock strap

Sir,

So I fought the good fight and won. (Eye 903: "...and another first for Heathrow Police"). But the case was far more apoplectic than your report suggested. No doubt the libel laws inhibited your account. Nevertheless, it was extremely satisfying to see the Metropolitan Police surrender their case in the face of my accusation of assault, etc, following Heathrow Police's manipulation of the breathalyser test.

Although I was grateful to see you giving the matter some publicity, I was a little miffed by your mistaken identity. Yes, I'm a Jock right enough, but we're not ALL "Jimmies". I don't know who fed you with the name "James Guthrie" when I am in fact "Jack Guthrie"... or was this a device to protect me, too, from libel?!

So how about correcting my name, if it's safe to do so?

A'rra Best, A'rra Time.
JACK GUTHRIE,
Camberley, Surrey.

Lifeboats
Royal National Lifeboat Institution

Boat drill

Sir,

Had Lord Gnome taken the trouble to talk to the RNLI before going to press with the scurrilous article "On The Lifeboats" he would have been aware that the "new" Mersey class lifeboat is in fact almost ten years old.

Since 1987 Merseys have been launched on service 2,206 times, saved 531 lives and spent 5,215 hours at sea. She replaced a lifeboat which had a top speed of 8.5 knots. The design requirement was for 15.5 knots, and when she went into service she was one knot better at 16.5 knots — almost a 100 per cent improvement on her predecessor.

The tunnel guards to which you refer were always an integral part of the design. They have to be, on any slipway or carriage launched boat, to protect the propellers. There are drawings from 1981 to prove it! The coxswains of all 37 Mersey class lifeboats in service today have nothing but praise for her. We certainly have no record of any Mersey class lifeboat being holed as you describe.

The teething troubles with the Severn class, which has not even entered service yet, are not unusual for a brand new class of lifeboat, nor any other boat for that matter. The Severn class lifeboat will not enter service until the RNLI is 100 per cent satisfied with it. Improvements are currently being made and the first lifeboat is undergoing trials.

The RNLI has been open and honest about the problems with the Severn class. Four separate news releases have been sent to the national media about them since February 1996.

All the problems to which you refer relate to one lifeboat, the first production model. This was due to become the Stornoway lifeboat, but because it had more teething problems than we, or the crew, would have liked, it has been decided that Stornoway should have a different Severn class lifeboat. The crew is extremely keen to receive their new boat. The Will, which will become part of the RNLI's relief fleet of lifeboats, is currently undergoing exhaustive sea trials off the Cornish coast and has been involved in two rescues in as many days. So she is saving lives before ever going into service.

The RNLI is in the business of preserving lives (more than 128,000 since 1824), not putting them at risk. The Penlee disaster, in 1981, was the last time that lives of RNLI crew or a lifeboat were lost.

The "new fangled designs", as you call them, are to provide our brave volunteer crews with the best equipment for the job. Our naval architects are professionals of the highest calibre, who have won Design Council awards for their work.

Modern lifeboats may be more complex and sophisticated than their predecessors, but they still depend, as they have always done, on the skill, courage and dedication of the men and women who must take them to sea, often in the worst of weather conditions.

Everyone in the RNLI is proud to be associated with our lifeboat crews and never forget the obligation we share in providing them wit the best possible equipment.

Yours faithfully,
B. MILES,
The Director, RNLI.

● ***More letters in this vein to come, Ed.***

Water logged

Sir,

Have you noticed Yorkshire Water's logo? It's a white rose — cut off from its supply by a broken "water main"!

Yours faithfully,
DUNCAN J. MARTIN,
Nottingham.

Aids memoir

Sir,

Your article "Careless in the Community" in last week's ROTTEN BOROUGH ADVERTISER *contained a number of inaccuracies regarding former Hackney Council social worker Mark Trotter.*

Four children have not died of Aids as a result of being abused by Mr Trotter. In fact, there is no clear evidence of sexual abuse in relation to Mark Trotter and young people in Hackney.

Mr Trotter was employed by Hackney in 1981 after rigorous employment checks. He was not on any police paedophile lists. The first evidence that Mr Trotter had abused children in Liverpool came to light two years after Mark Trotter left Hackney Council in 1995 and weeks after he had died of an Aids related illness.

Hackney Council has been actively trying to trace children who came into contact with Mr Trotter ever since, especially those who stayed in Trowbridge House children's home where he was a residential social worker from 1981 to 1986. A national helpline has been set up in partnership with the NSPCC for people to call on 0800 801 837.

Allegations that there has been a cover up because of Mr Trotter's political connections were referred to the police. They have found no evidence that this is the case.

Yours sincerely,
LORRAINE LANGHAM,
Assistant Chief Executive, London Borough of Hackney.

Fish in troubled waters

Sir,

Your story in issue 904, "Hogg Says Fish Is Safe", would have been funny, had it not appeared on the same day as the front page story enclosed.

If you continue to tell the truth in this way, I will be forced to report you to the Press Complaints Commission.

Yours faithfully,
STEVE O'GORMAN,
Aberdare, Mid Glamorgan.

Oxford doner

Sir,

As a subscriber and regular reader, I was a little disappointed by your somewhat ill-informed note about Mr Wafic Saïd's generous gift to help develop the business school in Oxford (Colour Section, 9 August).

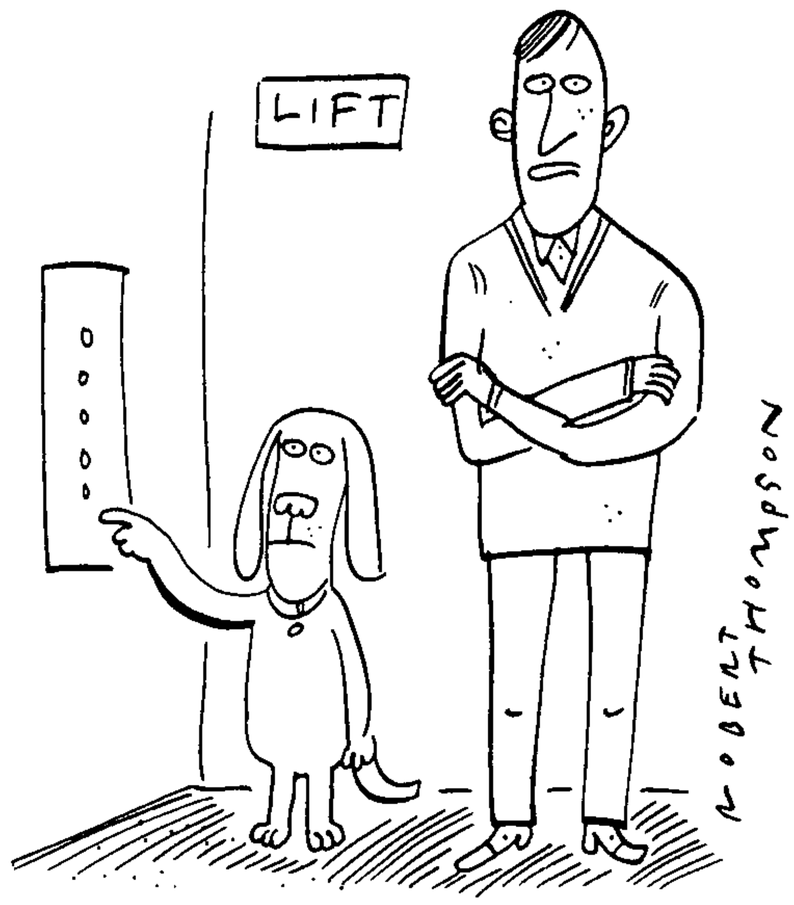
A decision to develop management studies as a university activity separate from Templeton College was taken in 1990, and the School of Management Studies was established in 1992. It is currently based in temporary space in the Radcliffe Infirmary. We have been seeking £20m for a building for some years, and are delighted we have now succeeded.

Templeton College received its Charter as a college of the University in 1995, and as is the case with other Oxford colleges, many of its fellows are also employed by the University, and are actively involved in the development of the School.

The timing of the announcement was governed by the donor's personal, and very proper, desire to retain confidentiality until after his son had received his degree results from Oxford. Equally, we have all been keen to press on with the project. Hence, the summer announcement. Dons of course, have full opportunity to discuss the project and express their views in Michaelmas Term. Advance work was done so the project could proceed efficiently following the public announcement.

Equally, there is absolutely no question of Mr Baker losing his job as groundsman. The building will occupy only part of the playing field, and alternative pitches will be made available, so that the facilities available to university staff will not be lost. The residents' survey, to which you refer, appears to have involved only a small number of people living near, but not adjacent to, the site. The only house adjacent to the site belongs to Balliol College, and is occupied by the Master, who has expressed his full support for the project.

Yours faithfully,
DR CLARK BRUNDIN,
Director, Oxford University School of Management Studies and President, Templeton College.



"Down boy"

Short sited

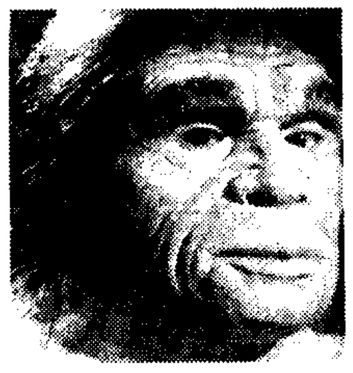
Sir,

I think that your report in Eye 904 on the UK web awards was a little unfair on the judges. After all .net magazine does state that "Chairman of the panel was .net editor Richard Longhurst who ensured that the judges did not influence the decision in the categories when they were involved with sites on the shortlist."

Don't you trust Mr Longhurst (who also happens to be a writer for the DAILY TELEGRAPH*'s Connected supplement) to see fair play?*

MATTHEW BEALING,
via email.

Lookalike



Jacobi

Neanderthal

Sir,

There is a strong resemblance between Neanderthal Man and Mr Derek Jacobi.

Is the one perhaps descended from the other?

Yours,
ERNEST F. EVANS,
Bradford-on-Avon.

Runs in the family

Sir,

Please make sure Square Eyes has access to good reference books.

Roger Black was the first British male athlete to win an Olympics 400 metres medal since 1936, so he won't be feeling disappointed.

CHARLES POTTER,
Teddington, Middlesex.

I-SPY

Jesmond Park

Submitted by Steve Dixon. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

"Hi, I'm the man in the street"

Runing passions

Sir,

Opening the seventh book of a series and criticising it because you don't know what's going on is plain daft. What do you expect? There were — er — six previous books that explained all that. It's up to the reader to make the effort to read them (or not bother if they're no good). And reading the first entry in the glossary and then giving up is hardly playing fair (unless you were pointing out that that's the extent of the glossary — in which case I'm afraid the point didn't come across).

I can't personally comment on A CROWN OF SWORDS *as it's volume seven of Jordan's extended mortgage payer. However, I'm sure book seven brazenly flaunts the faults that made its distant ancestor what it is: a badly written morass of cliche and Tolkien-plagiarism-by-numbers inhabited by unsympathetic one-dimensional characters and topped off by a cringeworthy feminist slant cynically inserted to make the book "fantasy for the 90s" or some other such rubbish. I stupidly struggled through 11 chapters before giving up; my girlfriend with her sweet patience managing 15. We should instead have followed the example of my brothers who only needed to read a chapter each before dismissing Jordan as "not as good as Tolkien" and never reading further. My brothers are only ten, so who is it who keeps Jordan in the bestseller lists? I think we should be told.*

KOLA KRAUZE & CHARLES GOODWIN,
via email.

O·B·N

As I disappear for a brief summer break, I have nominated Mrs P.A. Sloper, of Wallington, Surrey... to speak for you all:

"Please will you help me spearhead a campaign to let the Princess of Wales know how we, the public, feel. Please encourage like-minded people to write to her, and quite deliberately address the envelope to Her Royal Highness The Princess of Wales. The Palace may have stripped her of this title, but there is no law stopping us still using it. I for one will still curtsey if I am lucky enough to meet her again... Come on, Great Britain, let's do something practical!"

ANTHONY HOLDEN
Daily Express

Submitted by Peter Roberts.

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"If you've ever suffered from insomnia, you'll know what a nightmare it can be."
CARON KEATING, ITV
(Greg Davis)

Caller: *"I arrived in Birmingham in April 1956."*
Paul Ross: *"What time of the year was this?"*
PAUL ROSS, TALK RADIO
(Marshall Black)

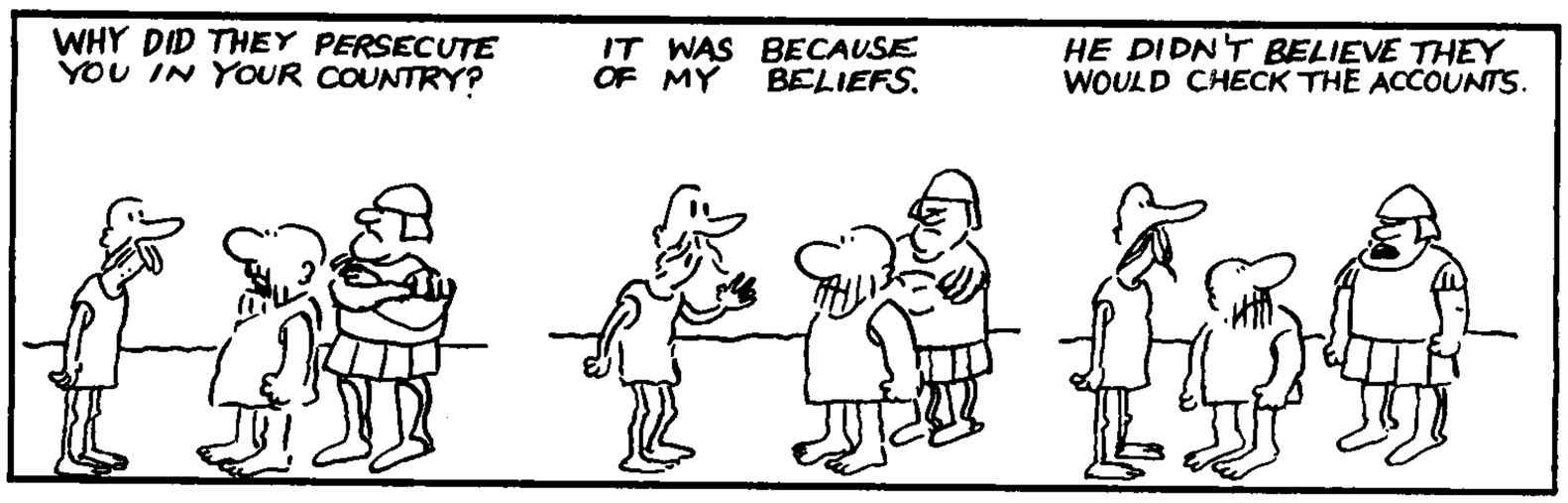
"We might be in for more rain than maybe we're going to get."
HENRY BLOFELD, RADIO 4
(D.I. Barker)

"It [MPs' pay rise] is a red hot political football!"
REPORTER, ITN
(Tom Cutler)

"We didn't have metaphors in our day. We didn't beat about the bush."
FRED TRUEMAN, RADIO 3
(Harry Thompson)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN



Letter from **Bosnia**

from Our Own Correspondent

ALL over Bosnia it's election fever. The question on everyone's lips is — will Bill Clinton win? If he does, we know that we Bosnians made the greatest campaign contribution to his victory. Indeed, many of us will make the ultimate contribution when everything hits the fan soon after, since it's obvious that we Bosnians will lose no matter what happens on *our* election day.

Warren Christopher says that our elections will "unify" Bosnia. Perhaps he has in mind the way that the shelling of Fort Sumter in 1860 unified the USA. We all know that our election is being rushed on September 14 just so that Clinton will win in November. Despite the advice of all impartial observers, the White House twisted everyone's arms to keep to the date set in Dayton. Of course they didn't have to twist arms of the British or French. They know it will lead to ethnic partition, which they have supported all along.

But NATO is under orders not to twist any arms that might lead to American casualties in the run up to *their* election, so NATO is beginning to make the old UN force look quite ferocious by comparison. Its soldiers run when they discover a huge illegal Serb arms dump at Han Pijesak — because they might come across the butcher of Srebrenica, Ratko Mladic, whom they're supposed to arrest.

At other arms dumps, like the one in Markvocic that would have taken 200 trucks to clear, the Serb police rustle up crowds of "civilian" demonstrators who IFOR runs away from, while the Serb military threaten to shoot down NATO helicopters. NATO is bolder with Bosnians of course. One of the seven Bosnian escapees from the Srebrenica massacre whom NATO handed over to the Serbs has just been released, and tells of months of beatings and interrogations after he was turned over by his "rescuers".

So how will the elections make things better? In the West, Herzegovina and half of Mostar are run by a creative combination of Croat Nazis and Mafiosi, who are running their own state. Anyone there who votes against Franjo Tudjman's party will have two major difficulties. Firstly, staying alive, and secondly learning of any other candidates, since all the media are controlled by the same gang, which also controls the police and army. And if you were a Muslim or Serb, don't even think about trying to enter! This is supposed to be part of the "Federation" that Dick Holbrooke patched together.

Here in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the other part of the gimcrack Federation, things are a bit better. We do have opposition parties, Croats and Serbs, although Izetbegovic's party does not go out of its way to make things easy for them. Opposition candidates don't get much of a mention in the state controlled TV or radio.

But it's still a lot better than in Republika Srpska, where ex-psychologist, present psychopath, quasi-President and would-be poet Radovan Karadzic is inspired by your poet Shelley to be the "Unacknowledged Legislator of the World". NATO is desperately trying not to arrest him and is dealing with his most loyal deputy as surrogate President. The Americans don't mind Karadzic holding the reins of power — as long as he isn't seen doing it in the run up to the elections!

Even nationalist Serb opposition parties have a hard time. Their candidates get sacked and mobbed — but never mentioned in the media that Dayton says is supposed to be open to all parties. Of course NATO keeps telling the Serbs that they shouldn't let Karadzic be mentioned, but the Serbs know that the purpose of these elections is a smooth ride for Clinton, and know what they can get away with — which is almost anything!

And then there's this freedom of movement thing. NATO is supposed to guarantee the right to return to refugees. But not one Muslim or Croat has returned to the areas the Serbs ethnically cleansed, and no Muslims or Serbs have returned to the Croat controlled areas. So we will have some very strange local elections. We know those Americans are used to most of their electors not voting. So maybe they are surprised that our people want to vote and to do so in their home towns!

So, you want to know the results of Bosnian elections? Easy. Odds on, partition and more civil war. Even Clinton wins.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

"It is correct that most of our players have undergone plastic surgery to develop their breasts," Patphong Srinutham admitted to reporters in Bangkok.

"But although we act and look like women, I think we still have every right to play in the men's team, because we have not yet changed our sexual organs."

***Patphong* was complaining at the way members of Thailand's top male volleyball team — the LadyBoy All-Stars — have been consistently overlooked by national selectors because they are all transvestites. "Why shouldn't we wear make up, long flowing hair, and flimsy women's underwear and top when we play? We like to be beautiful on court. But winning the gold medal against the country's best straight male players has proved that we are second to none for volleyball. So why shouldn't some of us be selected to play for the national men's team at the Olympic Games?"**

Later, an official of the Amateur Volleyball Association of Thailand explained the selectors' reservations. "We suspect some of them have vaginas, and we've heard them gossiping on the bench about how many men they get after a competition. If we let them join the team, what will happen to our real men players, who are still young and impressionable? Besides, we have to think of our country's international reputation. There will be no LadyBoys at the next Summer Olympics." *(The Bangkok Post, 4/7/96. Spotter — Richard Skene)*

—o—

"Anzac Day is our favourite day, because the veterans always drop like flies, and they're always carrying bundles of cash," said morgue worker Simon McLeod on a secret recording played to the Australian Independent Commission Against Corruption. "That's the best time to go ratting for lunch money."

The Commission had been hearing evidence against twelve workers at Glebe Morgue, all accused of systematically "ratting" (stealing from) the corpses in their charge, prior to burial, over a period of many years. On one secretly made recording, McLeod and fellow worker Ken Nichols boasted that "I'm no fucking angel, and I've had some huge wins in my time... I don't mind ratting decomposed bodies, but I hate these new polymer bank notes. They don't dry properly after washing, and it's hard to get shops to take really shitty notes... It's surprising what they hide in their false teeth. I found a hundred dollar bill stuffed under an old sailor's upper plate. It smelt so foul, they nearly didn't take it at my local bar. Have these people never heard of Steradent?"

The hearing continues. *(The Sydney Morning Herald, 28/6/96. Spotter — Tom Molomby)*

"Why he doesn't use a rolled-up newspaper like everyone else beats me," officer Mark McCabe of Erdington fire station told reporters outside the smouldering remains of a house in Perry Barr. "But his wife informs us that he always kills moths this way when he's in the bathroom, and that's what caused the problem.

"Apparently, as the moths fly towards him, he likes to squirt them with deodorant and then ignite the vapour with his lighter and barbecue them in mid-air. But this time the flaming insect flew straight against the polystyrene insulation, and set the bathroom alight. Everyone got out alive, except the moth, but by the time we got here it was already too late to save the house. I'd like to make it clear that the fire service does not recommend this method of exterminating insects.

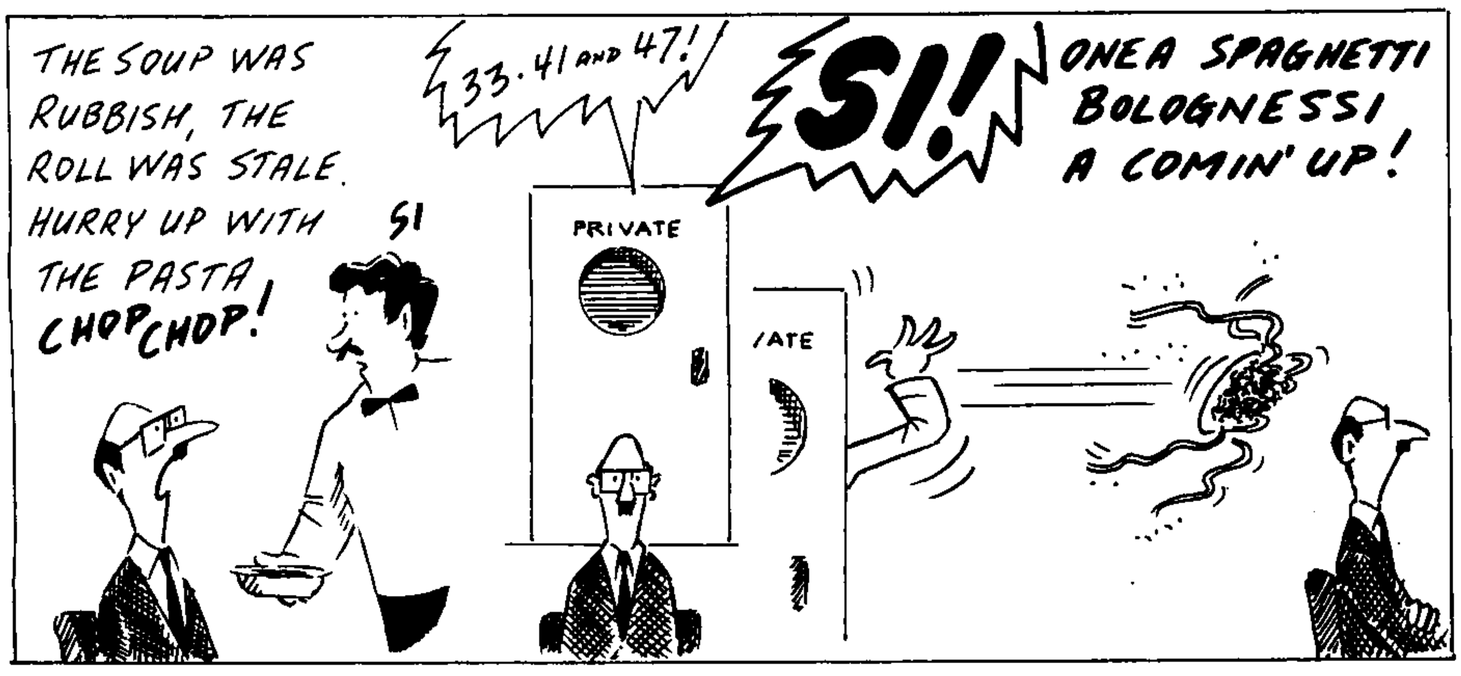
"As he was being carried into the ambulance, he thanked us and told us that his life's ambition is to join the fire brigade. I had to tell him he hasn't made a very promising start." (Great Barr Observer, 19/7/96. Spotter — Mary Wheeler)

Compiled by

Victor Lewis-Smith

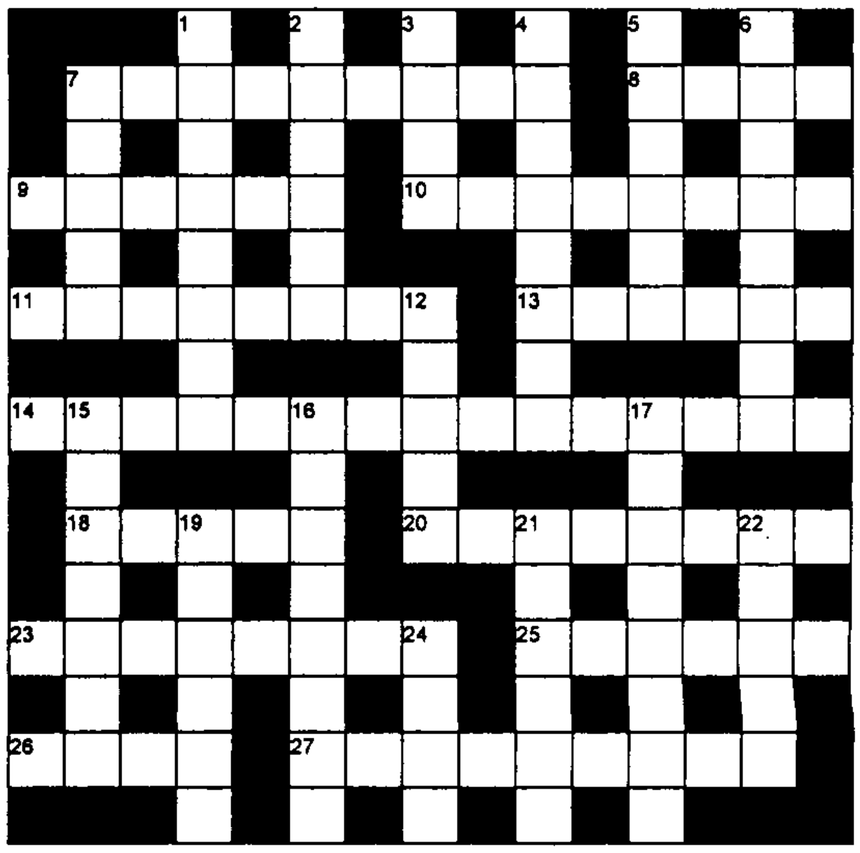
The Lottery Winners

TURNER


THE SOUP WAS RUBBISH, THE ROLL WAS STALE. HURRY UP WITH THE PASTA, CHOP CHOP!
33.41 AND 47!
SI!
SI
ONE A SPAGNETTI BOLOGNESSI A COMIN' UP!
PRIVATE
/ATE

EYE CROSSWORD 60

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

7 (see 25)
8 Whisky? Responsible for many a poor sod going over the top (4)
9 Knockout! Gosh! About time to do some brown-nosing (6)
10 A little tory-coloured, grade one, soundly right political supporter? (8)
11 Enterprise the prime mover in this backing of shits by white South African movement (4,4)
13 It's acceptable to have an orgasm — MPs have now enhanced theirs (6)
14 Broadcasting institution under threat from dire Christian youth show embracing student mass (3,5,7)
18 Socialist leader useless creep! (5)
20 Arse coming out with guff about franchise (8)
23 Snoop engaged by corporation (8)
25/7 One who's after Brenda — that makes her thirteenth, old duck (4,2,3,6)
26 Have tories hidden their anti-EU weapon? (4)
27 Slicker financial insights you get from us (2,3,4)

DOWN

1 The last stage before occupying the chair? (5,3)
2 A way to get wet Geoffrey senior outside (6)
3 Round figure appropriated by Maxwell — big mistake (4)
4 It offers compensation for the uncultivated (3-5)
5 Church truce-breakers going on about ex-prime minister (6)
6 Agitated member's sleazy cover-up? (5,3)
7 Tory leader needs to see off interfering old woman! (5)
12 Fame and glory offered by our rising nation? Sod off! (5)
15 Our lowdown on MPs food cover-up? (2,5)
16 Right to rudely hector one producing hot air (8)
17 Someone who hasn't got around to laying one on a minister (8)
19 Tory spin doctor takes precedence — could cause cabinet to crumble (3,3)
21 Eff you, we say, loony Herr Hitler! (6)
22 The Speaker wants new leader: a saviour of British art (5)
24 Abominable type taking refuge in tory etiquette (4)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 30.08.96. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 59

Winner: MRS A. HIGGINS

ACROSS: 8/13/20 Register of Members Interests 9 O'Toole 10 Asthma 11 Last post 12 Graft 13 (see 8) 16 Optimal 18 Dilemma 20 (see 8) 21 Scone 24 The Hague 26 Skimpy 27 Spigot 28 Portillo.

DOWN: 1 Censor 2 High office 3 Straw 4 Pro-life 5 Bolshevik 6 Romp 7 Old Sarum 14 Beef crisis 15 Watergate 17 Punch-ups 19 Attempt 22 Napalm 23 Usurp 25 Hogg.

The Secret DIARY OF JOHN MAJOR aged 47¾

Monday

This is not a historic day at all as I am on holiday. My wife Norman and I are in Algarvia staying once again at the Apartmentos Blockos which we share with a number of other charming British couples.

They are all very kindly pretending not to know who I am and are ignoring me.

The only person who has broken this protocol is the German man who runs the local bar, Mr Messerschmidt, who is married to an Englishwoman called Doreen who Norman gets on very well with.

When we went into his bar, which is called "The Trafalgar Arms English Breakfast Served All Day", he said to me:

"You are a bloody menace Herr Major. You have ruined my English Sausage Special and Sunday Roast Beef A-GO-A-GO! No one wants to eat Yorkshire Pudding with sardines or prawns! This BSE is all your fault!"

I was in no small measure annoyed with him and told him in no uncertain terms that in future I would find somewhere else to drink in the evenings.

Unfortunately, there isn't anywhere else, so it looks like Norman and I will be staying in and having a lot of early nights (6.30pm).

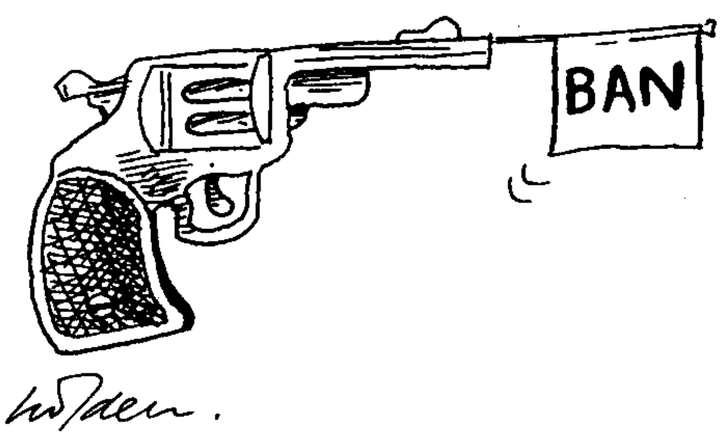
Tuesday

Mr Dr Mawhinney rang today, which was not inconsiderably annoying, to tell me that the newspapers were full of pictures of Mr Blair walking around Tuscany looking at old churches and art galleries. "Why can't we have some of you doing this?" he asked. "Because I am not in Tuscany," I told him in my especially stern voice. "I am in Algarvia and I am not interested in old churches anyway."

He then told me to get hold of a copy of the Daily Telegraph to see his latest poster which had been a great success.

I told him that I was too busy relaxing to worry about this, but later when I went down to the local store, Los Tescos, to buy some insect repellant for myself and some Factor 24 Sun-Block for Norman, I happened to see the headline "Demon Poster A Pathetic Flop For Tories" with a big picture next to it of Mr Blair with red eyes and huge teeth.

Mr Dr Mawhinney's idea has obviously caught on and has made it to the front pages!! Even the local Portuguese newspaper, The Algarvia Argos, has featured it as the top story. "Satanicos Blairos — Grandos Blunderos per Majores" it says!



Wednesday

Mr Howard has sent me a fax saying that there were a lot of dangerous people loose in Britain who might vote Labour.

It seems that six of our MPs have refused to ban handguns and that there has been a storm of protest.

Mr Howard says we are presented with a difficult choice:

Do we support our members in their unpopular decision or do we do a quick U-Turn in order to win some votes?

It is certainly a difficult balancing act and so I sent a fax back telling him to jump off at once and consider the second option very carefully.

However, it took me a long time to send the fax because the line was constantly blocked by someone trying to ring me up.

It turned out to be my brother Terry who has got the idea into his head that his book would sell very well in Algarvia and wanted my help to find a distributor.

"You will have to correct all the mistakes," I told him, with no small irritation. "For example, I did *not* buy my Raleigh Kestrel with the 3-speed gears from Peaslands in Sutton High Street as it says on page 151. The bike was a second-hand Humber Sprint from the Wallington Bicycle Shop next to the station. And the pump was extra."

"No one in Portugal will notice the difference," said Terry, to my not inconsiderable annoyance. "It is the broad sweep of the narrative that will carry the reader along — plus, of course, the new chapter about Mrs Kierans."

Thursday

Mr Dr Mawhinney has been on the phone once more causing me yet again to put down my friend Jeffrey Archer's excellent new novel and come inside.

This was in my judgement very annoying since I had just reached the bit where the hero Godfrey Bowman, having written a best-selling book about the tycoon Max Robertwell, becomes Prime Minister by popular demand after a Referendum.

This time Mr Dr Mawhinney had *bad* news. Mrs Thatcher has decided to speak at the Tory Conference on behalf of the Referendum Party.

"We are doing everything in our power to stop her," he assured me. "So she'll carry on and do it anyway," interrupted Norman, as she changed the blue tablet in the anti-mosquito device. Mr Dr Mawhinney asked me what we should do. I suggested that he produce another one of his posters, this time showing Mrs Thatcher with mad red eyes, huge teeth and the caption "Old Thatcher. New Danger".

"It is a very good idea, Prime Minister," he said, "and you really must not sit in the sun for too long."

Friday

Mr Howard has now phoned me up to ask my opinion about the identity card.

"I thought I had drawn a line under this one," I told him in my stop-bothering-me-on-holiday voice, which I have not copied from Mr Blair. Oh no.

"These new cards are voluntary, Prime Minister," Mr Howard assured me. "No one will be obliged to have one. It is just that they will be arrested and sent to prison if they don't."

Saturday

On leaving Algarvia airport I was stopped at the desk by a policeman who asked to see my identity card.

"It is purely voluntary," I told him, "and the details have not been worked out yet."

He immediately arrested me and Norman and I missed our plane. In the police station later I asked him: "Do you know who I am?" "No," he said in Portuguese (which is the same word "no") — which proves how essential these cards are even if you are a world-famous statesman.

NEW HOPE FOR MONEYLESS COUPLES

by Our Medical Staff **Lunchtime O'Bstetrics**

AN extraordinary breakthrough by specialist consultant Dr Max Clifford of the world-famous De Sanchez Institute has brought hope into the lives of moneyless couples through-out the world.

Now, for only a small percentage of the takings (20%) Dr Clifford can produce *healthy* cheques for the most desperate couples.

Birth Scam

The miracle treatment works as follows. Dr Clifford approaches a suitable donor i.e. News of the World, who will provide millions of pounds, all of which are free. These pounds are inserted into the nest-egg and grow into fully formed deposit accounts.

All the couple has to do is find some doctor who doesn't care and get a prescription for fertility drugs.

Said one mother-to-be, who wishes to remain on the front page of the papers: "I have been trying for years to get a lot of money and now, thanks to Dr Clifford, it has all come true. I will be forever in his debt — largely because Leroy has run off with all the money and some other bird."

ON OTHER PAGES

Hattersley attacks 'Immoral Mandy'

"Why should the irresponsible 'Mandy' Mandelson have eight times more influence than I have in the Labour Party?" he asks pathetically.

ST CAKES LEADS COMPLAINTS ABOUT 'A'-LEVEL STANDARDS

by Our Education Staff
Lunchtime O'Levels

THE HEADMASTER of the prestigious £30,000-a-term Midlands public school St Cakes hit out today at the new 'A'-Level examinations, and claimed that it was absurd to suggest that they were the same standard as in previous years.

"They are much more difficult," he told reporters, "which is why St Cakes is bottom of the Daily Telegraph League of Independent Schools.

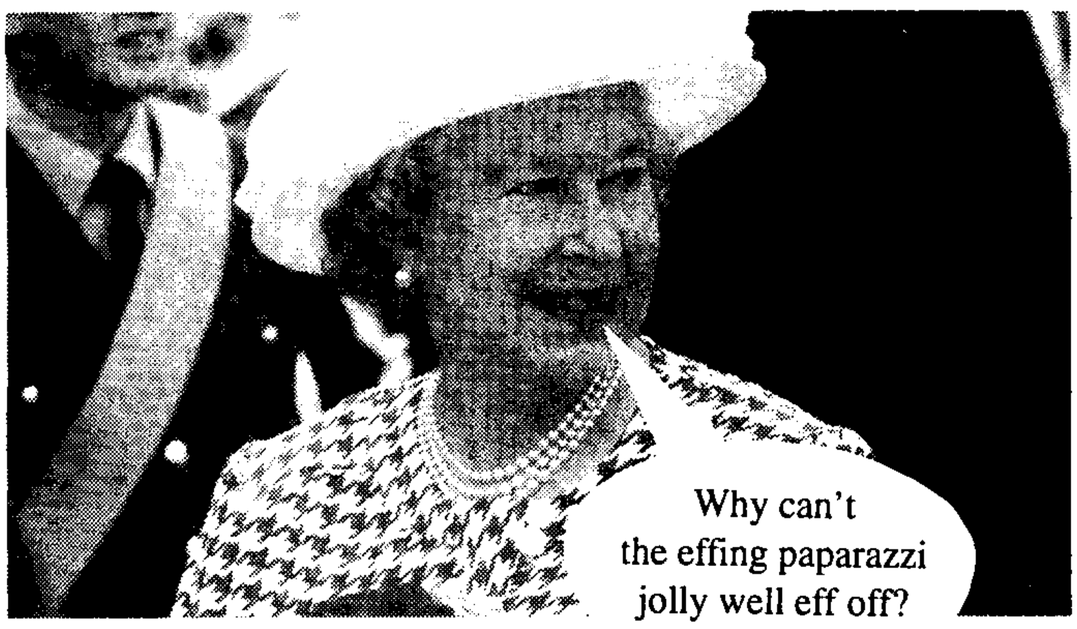
"Questions such as 'what is your name?' leave many of our students at a disadvantage, particularly the foreign ones who don't speak English."

He continued: "In many cases even I do not know their names — so how can they be expected to remember them?"

How St Cakes Rated

296	Ardingly College, Sussex	0 97 4 -7
297	St Rusbridga's School for Girls, Farringdon Rd	3 52 8 +2
298	The Jaspan Academy, Brent Spar	7 43 92 0
299	The Diana Spencer School For Young Gentleladies, Sloane Square	0 7 4 +3
300	St Cakes Independent School, W. Midlands	0 0 0 0

QUEENTIN TARANTINO



Advertisement

BAWS 18

Just when you thought it was safe to go on holiday! The beach was crowded, and then suddenly — PANIC! The alarm went off! The Great White Labour MP had been spotted looking for someone to attack.

Within seconds everyone had fled into the sea.

However, some holidaymakers were not so lucky...

BAWS

***starring* GLENDA JACKSON**

Coming soon to the following resorts:

BENIDORM **BENIGREEN**
BENIELTON ***and* TORYMOLINOS**

That British Identity Card

How it will look

Nom: Hargreaves
Nationalité: British
Indirizzo: 47
Äjt: 21 Acacia Drive, Dulwich
Zippenköd: Bricklayer
How do you vote?: Don't Know

Issued on behalf of Her Britannic Majesty by L. Norris,
EC Commissioner For The Issue Of Identity Cards, Brussels.

WOMAN TO GIVE BIRTH TO OCTOPUS

by Our Medical Staff **Dr Frank N. Stein**

A WOMAN who cannot be named, because we did not offer her enough money, is to give birth to an octopus, it was revealed today.

Miss Mandy Slapper, 37, is delighted with the News of the World (shurely 'news'? Ed.) and is determined that all eight legs of the octopus should be born together.

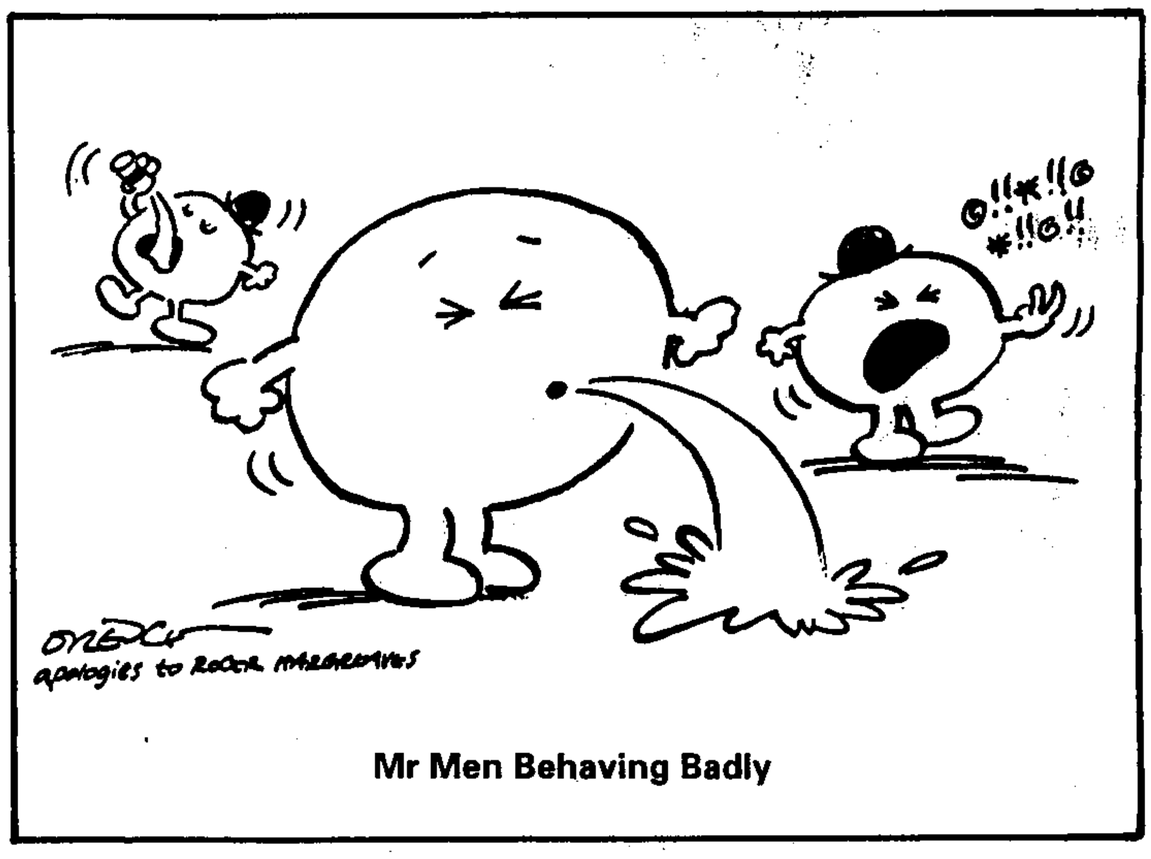
However, doctors at the world-famous Karloff Clinic in Transylvania are divided over whether the octopus can survive a natural birth. Dr Acula, the head of the clinic, told the Eye that: "We believe it would be better for Mandy to cut off a number of the legs prior to the birth. In this way at least some of the octopus would survive."

But plucky Mandy has decided to go ahead with £1 million from the News of the World and is supported by the pro-octopus movement.

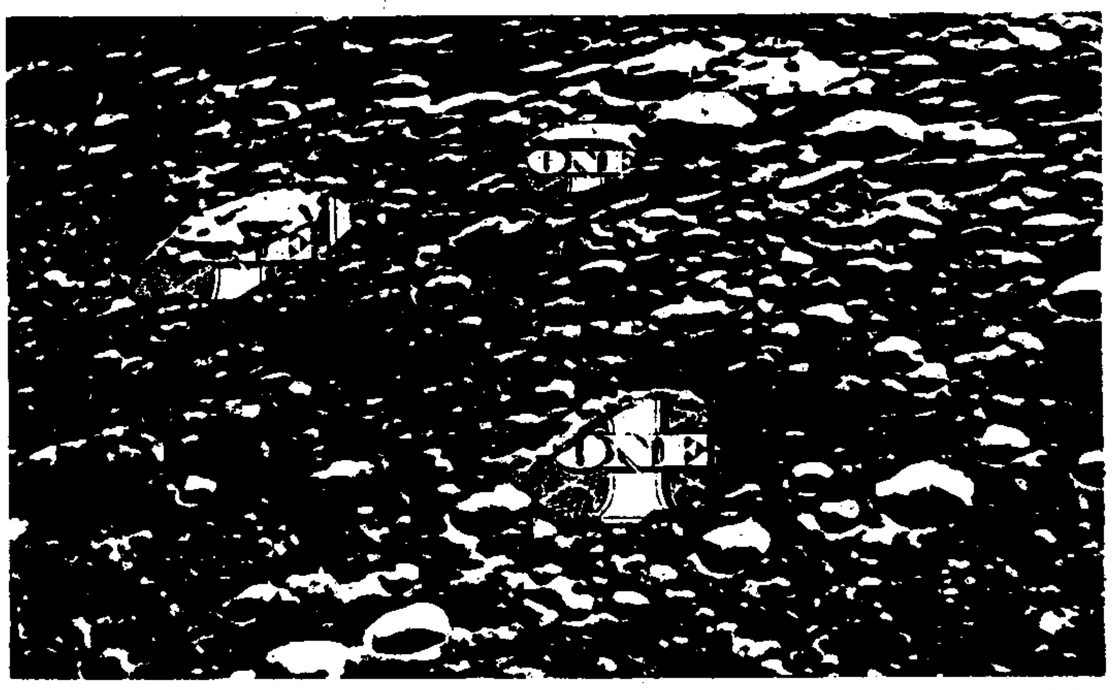
Dirty Max

But last night the father of the octopus, Mr Leroy Squid, announced that he had no plans to live with Ms Slapper. He said: "If the octopus stands to make Mandy a millionairess, I might reconsider my position which at the moment is on top of another woman."

Max Clifford is mad.



Mr Men Behaving Badly



IS THERE MONEY IN SPACE?

by **Adrian Berry-Unlikely**

SCIENTISTS at NASA's headquarters in Disney-land believe that they have discovered new evidence of money in outer space.

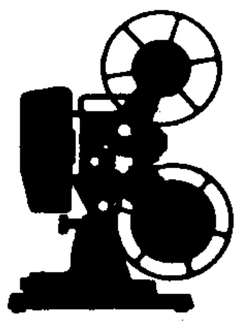
Said Professor Grant Needed: "We have been researching into the possibility of the existence of money on such planets as Mars and Jupiter and we now believe that by releasing blurred photographs of bits of rock we can actually solve one of the great mysteries of our time — ie, 'How do we get money when no one cares about space?' "

Mars Bore

The latest photographs released are the clearest signs yet that the professor is correct. Under the microscope the photographs clearly show an image of George Washington and the words "one dollar".

Last night President Clintstone hailed the discovery as a great event in American history. "This is a small step for mankind but a giant leap towards getting me re-elected."

Bob Dole is 169.



FILM HIGHLIGHTS

Jams and the Giant Fishcake (PG) CLASSIC children's fable about a little billionaire who dreams of taking over the world in a giant Fishcake. His creepy-crawly friends, such as Taki, Aspinall and Thatcher, are brought marvellously to life in this wonderful blend of surreal lunacy and real-life madness.

Independent Day (12) EXPENSIVE disaster movie in which Britain's major cities wake up to find a huge broadsheet threatening to bore everyone to death. Various gallant attempts are made to destroy the flagship by men like Charlie "Gung-Ho" Wilson and the Nerdy Whizz-Kid Andreas Whittam-Smith. But in the end only the crazed suicide bomber, David Montgomery, can finish the job by blowing it up from the inside and reducing it to a pile of rubbish.

The Guns of Dunblane (18) CAN a select team of Tory MPs keep the guns firing in the face of all odds? Yes. Classic British farce. *(That's enough films. Ed.)*

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

AT HOME WITH CALVIN AND KELLY KLEIN:
cK one
FOR MEN AND WOMEN
I'VE GIVEN IT TO WOMEN AND MEN
AND THEY ALL LOVE IT!
DIVORCE PAPERS

A south Shropshire couple who first met in their local pub will call "lime" at the end of the month after 31 years as its landlord and landlady.

South Shropshire Journal

Summing her up, he quoted the words of another textiles expert: "She is one of the few people in the design world who has managed to retail her integrity."

Hampshire Chronicle

The Daily Hellograph

FINAL

FRIDAY, AUGUST 23, 1996

Oasis Bigger Than Beatles — Official

by Charles Moore (Editor)

A QUARTER of a million young people of the type we would like to buy the Daily Telegraph assembled yesterday to listen to the popular singing group, the OASIS.

This has sparked off a huge national debate. I have asked two of the Daily Telegraph's *most senior writers* to put the case for and against.

Sarah Sandwich, 43, Senior Features Editor, Telegraph Publications.

FOR ME Oasis are the quintessential sound of summer. A chilled white wine on the lawn or strawberries and cream on a lazy afternoon. They are a quiet stroll through a leafy wood. The murmur of a stream dappled with sunshine. The half-forgotten memory that flutters across the mind like a butterfly. Their song, "Morning Glory, Vote Tory", seems to capture so much of what the Daily Telegraph is all about.

Boorish Johnson, 39, Senior Political Correspondent Telegraph Publications and Author of "Whither Maastricht?" (Routledge, Keegan, Paul £49.99)

TO COMPARE the pitiful twanging of Oasis with the sublime genius of McCartney and Lennon is like talking about the Sistine Chapel in the same breath as a McDonald's Hamburger. A composition like "Let It Be" with its Catholic imagery, philosophical undertones and Indian harmonics is unparalleled in the field of modern music.

Whereas a song like "Morning Paper. It's the Daily Telegraph" is so pathetic that my cleaning lady cannot even hum it and nor can my chauffeur.

Where do you stand on the great OASIS/BEATLES debate?

CHARLES MOORE is waiting to take your call.

Ring him NOW on 0171-538 5000 and tell him what you think.

YES

Oasis are better than the Beatles

NO

The Telegraph is much worse than The Guardian

The Rocky Horror Registry Office Ceremony Book

No. 94: The Solemnization of a Civil Marriage

Man With Glasses: Hurry up, we haven't got all day.

Bride and Groom *(together)*: Sorry.

Man With Glasses *(or he may have a beard)*: Have you filled in the forms?

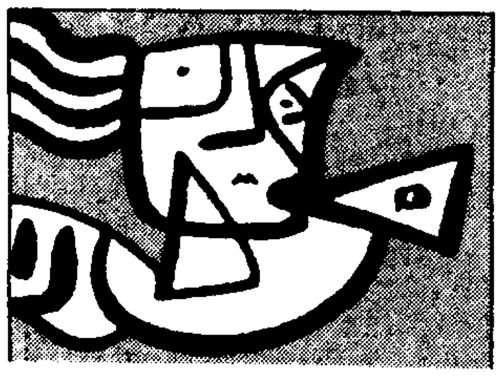
Bride and Groom *(together)*: We have.

Man With Glasses: You're now married. Could you ask the next couple to step inside? May I remind you that the throwing of confetti is banned on council property and please do not obstruct the exit by taking photographs. Thank you.

Bride and Groom (together): Is that it?

(A piece of appropriate Muzak may be played as the couple depart. It could be the theme tune from Four Weddings and a Funeral or similar)

THE END



EDINBURGH HIGHLIGHTS

The very best of today's Festival and Fringe Events

COMEDY

Dave Dave, the Wanstead born stand-up comic, runner-up in last year's prestigious Nutrasweet Award, returns once again to the Mad Cow **(venue 1,732)** with his unique mixture of observation, rap, improv, and four letter flights of fancy. *"The funniest man in Britain", Julie Burchill* (3am).

BALLET

The Disabled Dance Troupe of Chechnya perform their new interpretation of Swan Lake set in Grozny at the time of the Russian military intervention. Tchaikovsky's music, rewritten by Smirnoff, is a perfect complement to Kalashnikov's exciting choreography. Lunchtime, The New Elizabethan Hall **(venue 8,359)**. *"Unmissable", Kaleidoscope.*

ART

"Mainlining" — an exhibition of new photographs of young Glaswegians injecting themselves with heroin in terrifying black and white close up. Photographer **Willy McSelf** spent six months living on the streets of Dundee to capture these haunting images of contemporary Gaelo-urban angst. *"A life changing experience", James Kellman.* National Gallery of Scotland **(venue 5,342)** (9am-5pm. Not weekends. Closed Monday-Friday.)

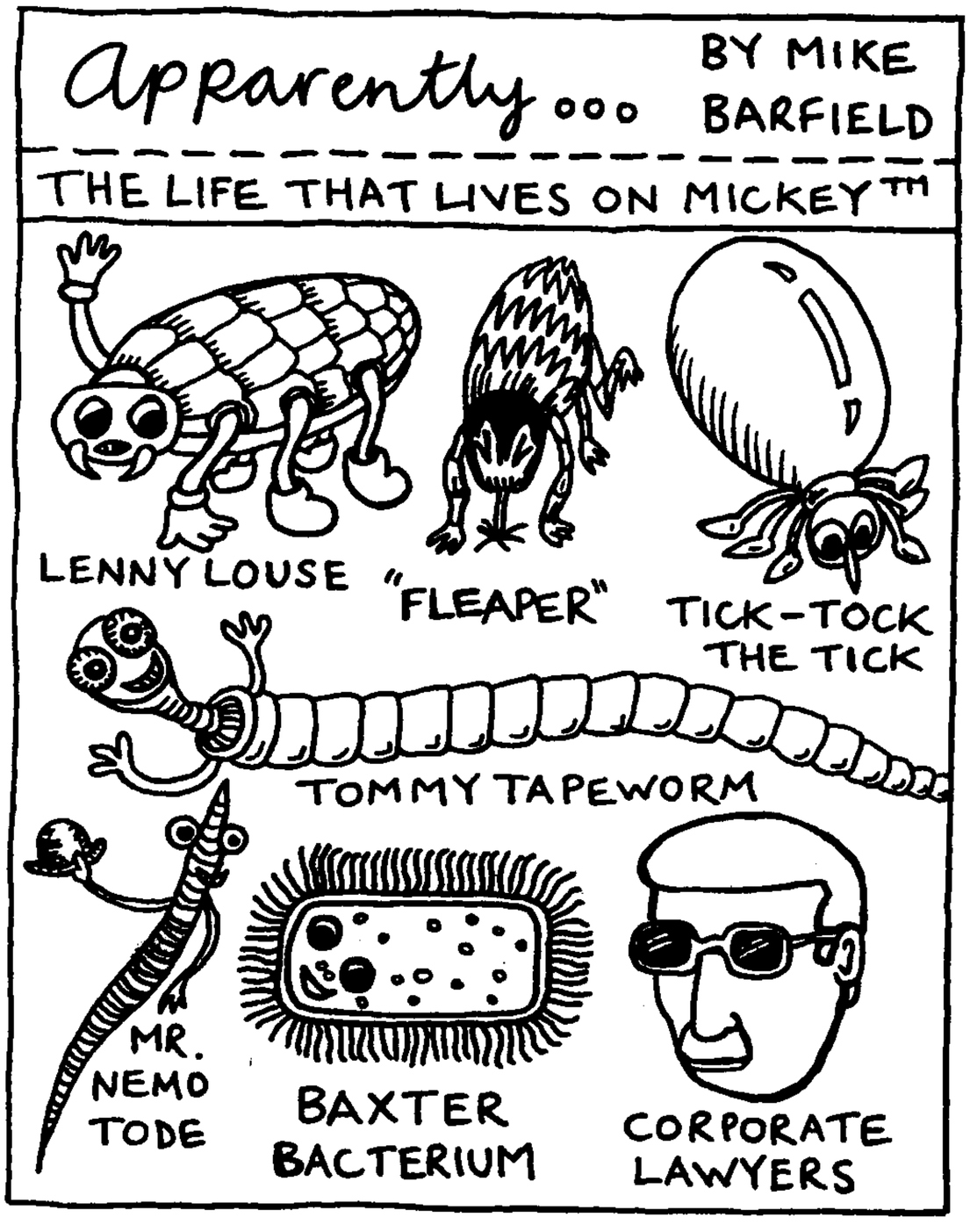
THEATRE

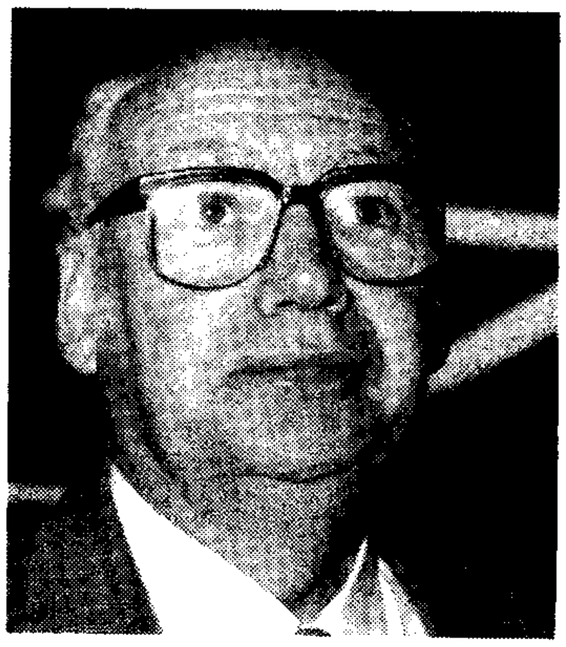
"Scones With Othello" — the **Basildon University Experimental Drama Workshop** (formerly the Billericay Polytechnic Players) present a dramatic reworking of Shakespeare's familiar tragedy set in a Scottish tea room with Othello and Iago as two elderly Edinburgh homosexuals vying for the affection of Desmond, the young pastry chef. *"Terribly exciting", Nicholas de Jong.* Mrs McGrotty's cake shop **(venue 17,438)** 2.30pm.

Spanish guitar virtuoso Domenico Lorsonez plays Schubert, Britten and Sibelius. The Usher Hall* (venue 1,737,407) *7.30pm. Admission Free.

PERFORMANCE

The Fetish Circus of New Dworkin return with their triumphant counterpoint of chainsaw and torture equipment. St Dunstan's Episcopalian **(venue 174,308)** by kind permission of the Rector (7.00pm). *"This Year's Hit", Andrew Jaspan, The Big Issue.* (That's enough Edinburgh. Ed.)





JIMMY KNAPP, General Secretary of GMT (formerly A.S.L.E.E.P.) explains the latest move in the pay and conditions dispute with London Underground

Urr oberammergau tannochbrae magnus magnusson doggerheligoland rockall NEW BALLOT OF THE MEMBERSHIP — serendipity carryonupthekhyber chicken macnugget harry lauder harry enfield harry krishna george macdonald fraser WAIT AND SEE gerard manley hopkins my bonny lies over the ocean GO TO ARBITRATION cowden beath heart of midlothian stirling academicals REGRET INCONVENIENCE TO OUR PASSENGERS arianna stassinopolos huffington puffington puffertrain INTRODUCTION OF TEAMWORKING *(continued throughout summer)*

KNEE SACKED IN NEASDEN SENSATION

by **E.I. Erewego**, Our Man In The Executive Box With The Copy Of Loaded And The Bottle Of Bruce's Riocha

THE WORLD of soccer was rocked to its foundations when, on the eve of the new season before even a ball was kicked, Neasden supremo Ron Knee, 59, was given his cards by Chairman Brigadier Buffy Cohen.

In a scene reminiscent of Julius Caesar's murder in 55BC the ashen-faced supremo, who in his 40 year reign had filled the Neasden Silver Cabinet with framed photographs of his daughter, Ronette, was shown the door.

"Don't come back," he was told by the ungrateful Cohen, "and clear the bottles off your desk."

SHOCK

Said Knee: "I have given my whole life to Neasden. And this is how they repay me. I wanted to buy new players but Cohen would not give me the money. I had to pay the likes of Adolf Klingfilm and Eddie Depardieu myself out of my winnings at the dog track."

Last night Cohen issued a shortlist of top possible managers to fill soccer's hottest hot-seat. They included:

- **Christofero Silvestodoulos**, 47, currently managing Crete's top amateur team "Tavernos Minotaurs".
- The Belgian national coach **Griz Van Dompf**, 69, known as The Silver Squirrel.
- **Laurence van der Rhubarb**, manager of South Africa's Premier League Champions Hottentottenham Hotspur.
- **Ron Knee**, 59, currently manager of "Sid's Caff" in the North Circular lay-by.

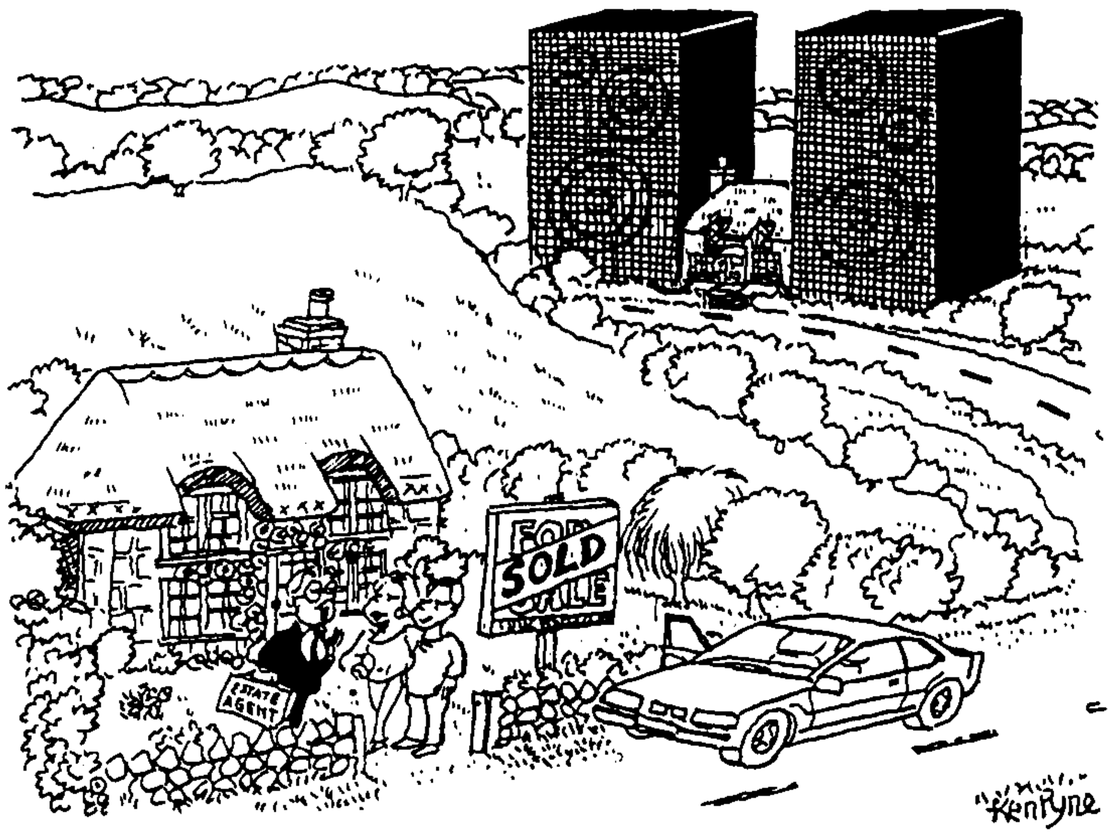
Another Shock

A poll amongst Neasden fans (Sid and Boris Bonkers) showed that 100% of the club's supporters would opt for Ron Knee. Said Sid Bonkers: "No one else could do this job and no one else would want it."

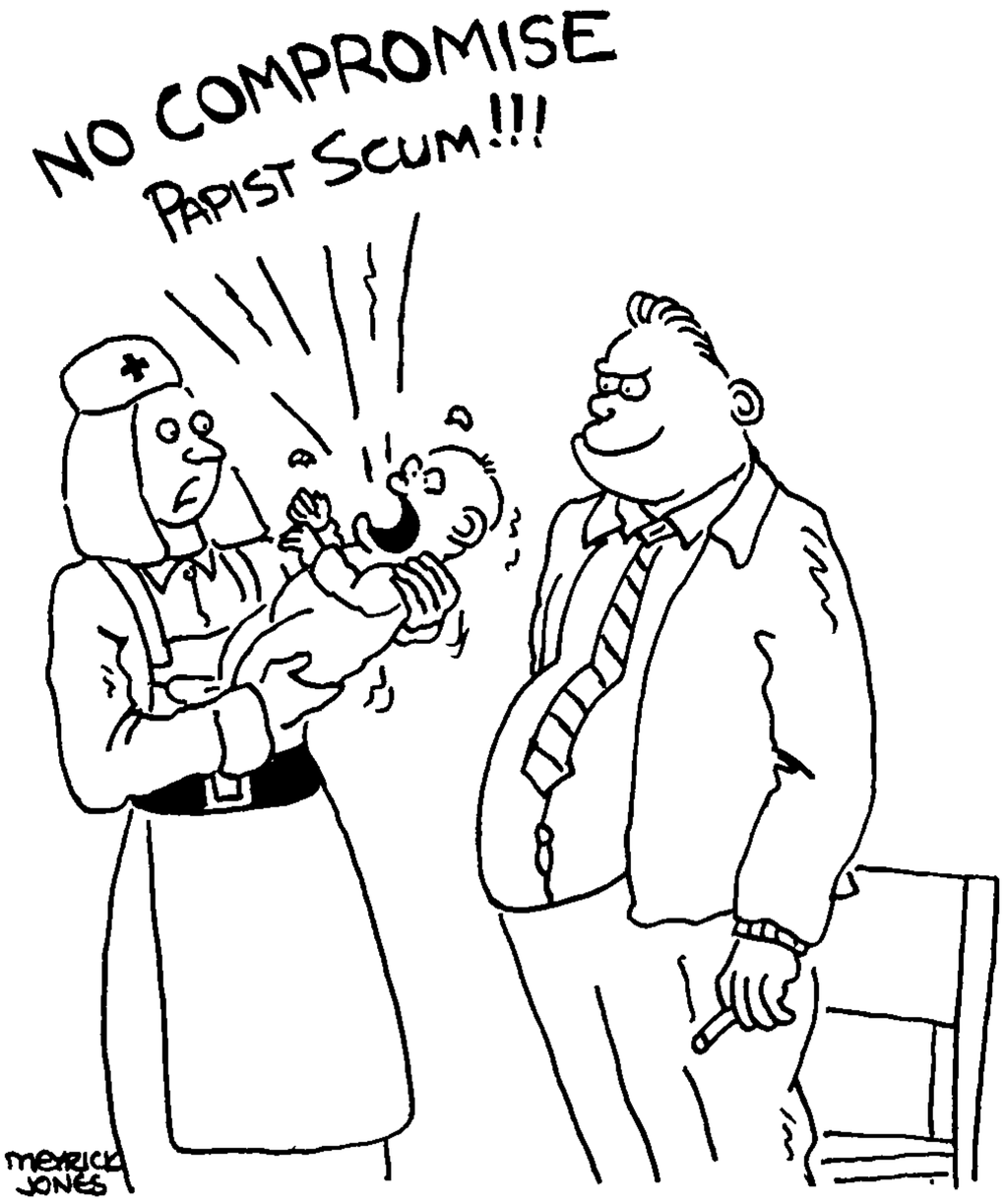
Pre-Season Friendly

Neasden F.C. 6
(Shearer [o.g.] 6)
Newcastle United 0

MAN OF MATCH: Neasden's exciting new signing from Romania, "Chucky" Ceaucescu



"Oh, you don't have to worry about neighbours — the nearest is a quarter of a mile away!"



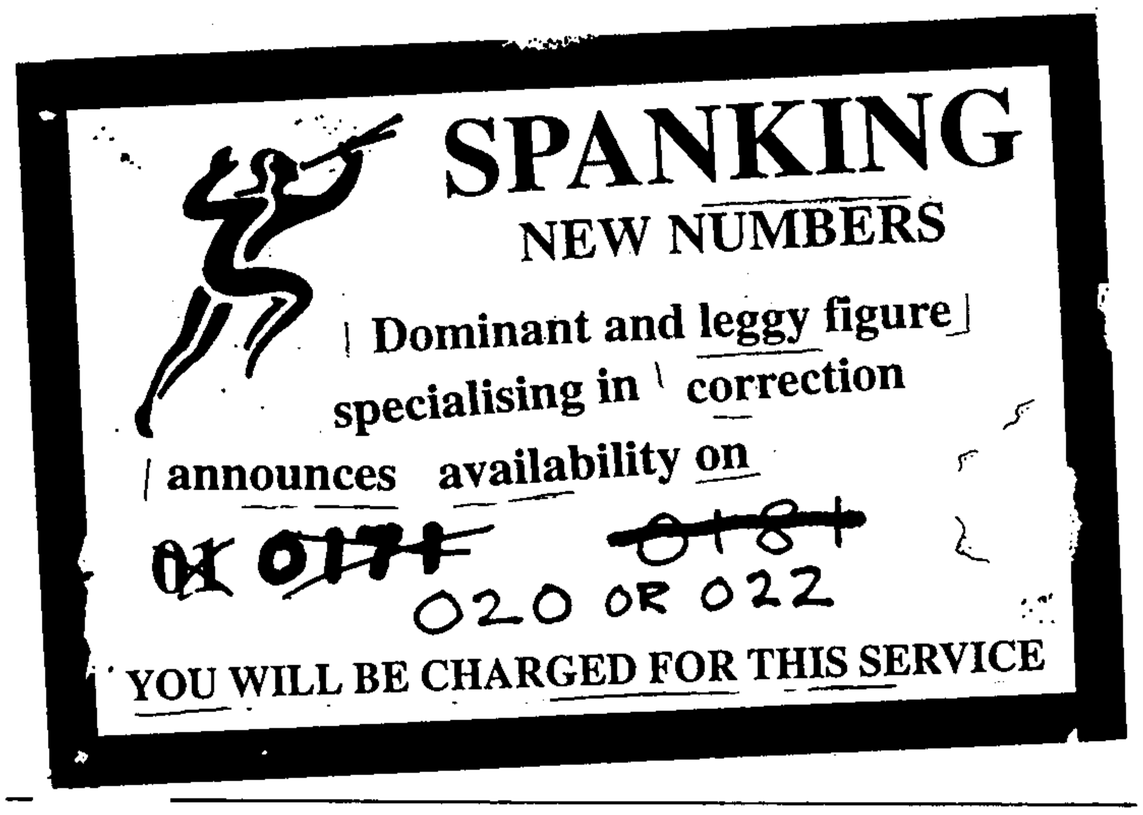
"Congratulations, it's an Apprentice Boy."

STUPID BURGER

In Tomorrow's Daily Mail

BLAIR 'TO MURDER QUEEN MOTHER'

The shocking story of how a pamphlet from the Fabian Society suggests that Labour should consider streamlining the monarchy.



ROYAL INJUNCTION DEMANDED IN STALKER SHOCK

by Our Court Staff **Anthony Holdonheresanotherpiece**

MEMBERS of the public last night sought an end to what they described as "the living nightmare" of continual harassment by the Princess of Wales. Said one victim:

"Every morning I wake up and there she is on the doorstep. I can't get away from her. Day in, day out, there she is staring at me out of the newspaper. Even when I go inside into the living room, there she is on the television."

He continued, sobbing: "Why can't she leave us alone?"

A spokesman for the Princess defended her continual appearances in the media saying: "It is not her fault. She is basically harmless if a little sad."

A Doctor writes

AS a doctor I am often asked: "Doctor, is it possible for you to deliver eight pages by tomorrow morning?"

The simple answer to the editor's question is: "Yes, of course. What's the money?"

What happens is that the newspaper is suffering from sillyseasonitis or what we doctors call *Augustus typicalis normalis.*

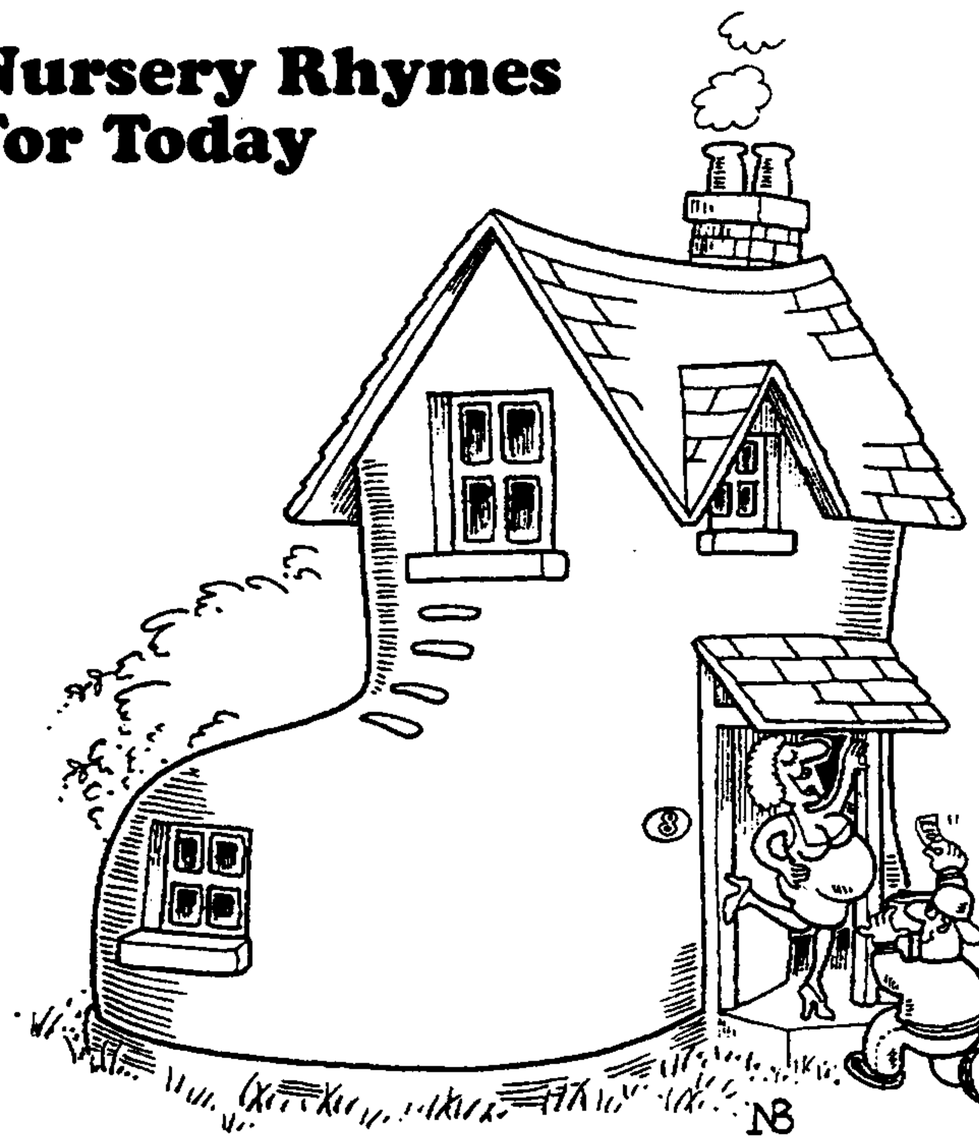
The editor tends to undergo feelings of panic and despair and becomes obsessed with medical stories such as the woman with eight babies.

He then goes to a doctor who writes him out an unreadable piece on the subject. The editor is however not satisfied and asks for a second opinion piece. And then a third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth.

If you find your entire features staff are in Tuscany, do give me a ring.

© *A Doctor*

Nursery Rhymes For Today



There was a young woman who lived in a shoe,
Who had so many children she knew exactly what to do.
She phoned up the papers and asked for the Ed.
She flogged them the story and took home the bread.

From The Referendum Bunker

Bulletin No. 94

Achtung!

So! Mr Bond! You see, I am invincible! Why do you persist in your pathetic schemes to try and thwart my masterplan?

You remind me, Mr Major-Bond, if I may say so, of Mr Botham who so foolishly took on the might of me, Sir Marmagold Fishbore!

And my trusted son-in-law Imran the Mighty Khan Fish hit him for a six!! Isn't that what you say in your funny little country? Heh, heh, heh!

But enough small talk, Mr Bond. I have yet another surprise for you.

(Trapdoor opens and oily looking man in suit emerges carrying flipchart)

You remember Mr Beaumont, do you not? No? Perhaps this will refresh your memory...

(He flicks golden button on desk which turns shark tank into huge cinema screen. A crackly black and white film begins showing Beaumont walking along Brighton promenade with Mrs Thatcher. Beaumont is carrying her handbag obsequiously)

Another top-level defector, Mr Bond, who sees Goldsmersh as the only way forward!! Nicht wahr?

How many more men like this can you afford to lose, I wonder?

(Goldblend strokes white elephant on lap temporarily on loan from the Aspinall World of Dangerous Elephants, Folkestone)

Guards! It is time for Mr Major to leave us – perhaps for ever!!

(Highly-trained old Etonians grab Major and escort him to the shark tank as Sir Golden Fishhead climbs into underwater helicopter and disappears to his headquarters at the centre of the earth)

Issued On Behalf Of The Referendum Party Of Great Britain

The theme music for this advertisement — "From Mexico With Money" — was sung by Lady Annabel Bassey (no relation)

Lines On The Relaunch Of The Humorous Magazine *Punch*

by William Rees-McGonagal

'Twas in the year nineteen hundred and ninety-two
That the famous magazine *Punch* went down the loo.
Lord Stevens of Ludgate was the man who pulled the chain.
There were few mourners as this venerable periodical went down the drain.

For four glorious years the dentists' waiting rooms were free
From what had been the unfunniest magazine in the whole of history.

As the patients sat there with many a toothy groan
They enjoyed instead the delights of *Country Life* and *Woman's Own.*

But this happy idyll was fated not to last,
As someone came forward to try and recreate the past.
It was none other than Mr Mohamed Fayed,
Whose motto was "If it's English I'll buy it."

Mr Fayed hailed from the Land of the Nile
And of ready money he claimed to have a considerable pile.
However, when the Department of Trade and Industry examined his books,
They claimed that he and his two brothers were a bunch of crooks.

Despite this appalling slur on his good name,
It was as an Englishman that Mohamed sought to make his fame.
But his attempts to acquire a British passport
After the action of the Home Office came to naught.

It was then in a state of chronic desperation
Our Egyptian friend looked for new ways to impress the leaders of the nation.
He decided to buy the defunct magazine *Punch*
And immediately took his prospective editor out to lunch.

This lucky candidate was a braw Scots lad,
Whose column in the *Evening Standard* was notoriously bad.
Peter McHackey was the name of the Pharaoh's choice,
And all he asked for was £100,000 a year and the use of a Rolls-Royce.

"Done!" cried Fayed. "I like your style."
"No one else does," replied McHackey, with a somewhat boozy smile.

So the Egyptian and the Scotsman toasted their deal
With champagne — you should have seen the bill at the end of the meal!

Soon the word flew around the bars of the former Fleet Street,
Where old hacks like Alexander Chancellor and Mike Molloy still came to meet.
"*Punch* is back!" went up the joyous cry.
"And — would you believe it? — the editor is Peter McKay!"

In an instant the hacks all made it quite plain
That they wanted to scramble aboard the Harrods' gravy train.
"Welcome! Welcome!" said the burly beaming new editor of *Punch.*
"I suggest we all go out and have an enormous lunch!"
(You've done this rhyme. Ed.)

Unfortunately, by the time the magazine finally appeared,
It was even worse than people had initially feared.
Mr Fayed looked at his quarterly cash flow.
Where had the millions of pounds gone? No one seemed to know.

In newsagent's shops throughout the land
The unsold copies piled up on every stand.
Even in Harrods there was not a single sale.
The customers continued to buy *Hello!* and the *Daily Mail.*

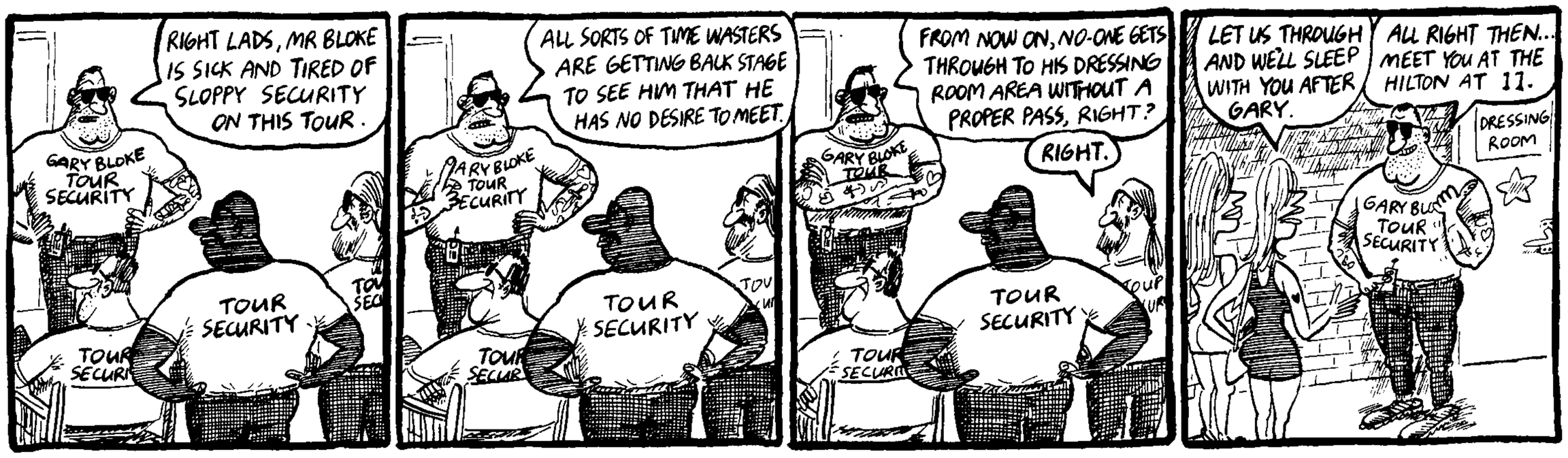
The Pharaoh's rage was a wonder to behold,
As he looked at his fast-diminishing pile of gold.
And, weeping into his man-sized tissue,
He told McHackey: "You're not fit to sell the *Big Issue.*"

Thus it was that in nineteen hundred and ninety-six,
The great magazine once again found itself in a desperate fix.
However, at last people could say that *Punch* was funny
Because it was the cause of Mr Fayed losing a huge amount of his money.

© *Lunch Magazine, c/o Harrods Food Hall*

Celeb

LIGGER


RIGHT LADS, MR BLOKE IS SICK AND TIRED OF SLOPPY SECURITY ON THIS TOUR.
GARY BLOKE TOUR SECURITY
TOUR SECURITY
ALL SORTS OF TIME WASTERS ARE GETTING BACK STAGE TO SEE HIM THAT HE HAS NO DESIRE TO MEET.
FROM NOW ON, NO-ONE GETS THROUGH TO HIS DRESSING ROOM AREA WITHOUT A PROPER PASS, RIGHT?
RIGHT.
LET US THROUGH AND WE'LL SLEEP WITH YOU AFTER GARY.
ALL RIGHT THEN... MEET YOU AT THE HILTON AT 11.
DRESSING ROOM

DIARY

My mother always used to say, "David, you may be of a superior intelligence to everyone else on this beleaguered planet of ours, but that tongue of yours will surely be the ruin of you!" Little did that poor misguided female know that the aforesaid appendage would in fact be the making of me! As the world now acknowledges, the Starkey Tongue — marvellously pink and moist, enviably mobile, with a devilishly powerful sting when aroused — has made me one of the most talked-about figures in the Western World. Only yesterday, the *Daily Express* granted me substantial space really very high up on page 5 to consider the rights and wrongs, from a neo-Voltairian perspective, of the new-look Berlei booster brassiere. And just two days before that, the famous Starkey Tongue had made a well-received guest appearance on Radio Clyde to deliver the perspective of a distinguished social historian on the new Schwarznegger "movie".

And here's a little exclusive for you: plans for the immortalisation of the Starkey Tongue are already well afoot. A fervent admirer — let us, for the sake of argument, call him "Dr D.S." — has written to the Director General of the BBC (a Mr John Birt) officially to echo the widespread view that the Corporation should honour its most valued practitioner in the fashion most appropriate. "A sculpture of the Starkey Tongue in pliable rubber, three metres by twelve metres, moistened 24 hours a day by electronic water-ducts, is long overdue. The foyer of Broadcasting House is positively crying out for it. It would be the envy of the world. Will you not now show the moral courage to comply with a nation's needs, you wretched imbecile?"

DR DAVID STARKEY

"You wretched imbecile!" It is for this type of deliciously caustic remark that the Starkey Tongue has gained its international renown. My waspish put-downs have become legendary, to be quoted wheresoever in the world high intelligence is afforded its true respect. Savour, for instance:

To a little old lady collecting money for the poor: "Shove off, you ghastly collection of ill-assorted and increasingly decrepid molecules — and take your inelegant collecting box with you! It makes me want to vomit!"

To a leading heart surgeon: "I put it to you that you would rather beat an innocent baby to a pulp than get your stubby little fingers dirty by saving a life — answer me that one, go on, answer it, you dolt, you can't can you, I said you can't can you? Pah! It makes me want to vomit! Game, set and match to Starkey!"

To a tireless aid worker: "Doesn't he genuinely make you want to vomit — his dogoodery, his awful *niceness*, his endless look-at-me-I'm-so-bloody-tirelessness? It makes me want to vomit!

A gem every time! Can one think of a single other accredited academic who has made such a distinguished name for himself as The Rudest Man in Britain on mid-morning talk radio? Of course one can't! To my certain knowledge, Sir Geoffrey Elton hasn't even appeared on the Household Tip slot of The Big Breakfast, let alone featured on the double-page Celebrity Bathroom spread in *YOU* magazine! Yet he possesses the infernal impudence to call himself an historian! Frankly, it makes me want to vomit!

Of my many academic hats, the one I find most profitable to wear is that of the Leading Constitutional Expert. If, say, a major national newspaper wants a Leading Constitutional Expert to test-drive the new Alfa Romeo or comment on the latest gravity-defying garment worn by — ooh, don't! — Miss Pamela Anderson, then it is to Dr David Starkey that they instantly turn.

As you well know, I am a regular fixture on BBC2's widely-respected Newsnight programme. Incidentally, I rib Jeremy (Paxman) mercilessly both on and off the air! Only last month, he asked me to comment on the future of the Royal Family under a divorced monarch from a constitutional perspective. "How dare you prance into this studio and ask me impertinent questions about the Constitution, you tall, dark interrogator, you!" I responded, quick as a flash. I then paused for effect before adding, "You make me want to vomit!" Result? Two inches of coverage (plus mugshot) on page six of the next day's *Daily Mirror* — not to mention a suitably irate reader's letter in the *Daily Mail*! How wrong you proved to be, Mother — how very wrong you proved to be!

Envious detractors, and, sad to say, there are many such mischievous reptiles, accuse me of intellectual name-dropping, and of presenting cliché in the guise of bogus paradox. To them I say further from the truth nothing could be, for nothing could be further from the truth. To be frank, I have long detested those who ride on the coat-tails of greater minds; I am with Wittgenstein, Montaigne and La Rochefoucauld on this.

They also accuse me of sadism and cruelty. This is really very naughty of them, very naughty indeed — smack botties all round, methinks! Any halfway competent geneticist will confirm that it is not my fault that I combine a very strong analytical intelligence with an exceedingly powerful verbal intelligence. But cruel? Never! Witness my warmth and kindness in dealing with my colleague Janet Daley when she popped into the Moral Maze studio to be on The David Starkey show this week. Janet tends to "go on a bit", as Shakespeare might have put it — and it takes all my powers of tact and diplomacy to save her from herself.

Janet Daley: We all have a moral responsibility for our —

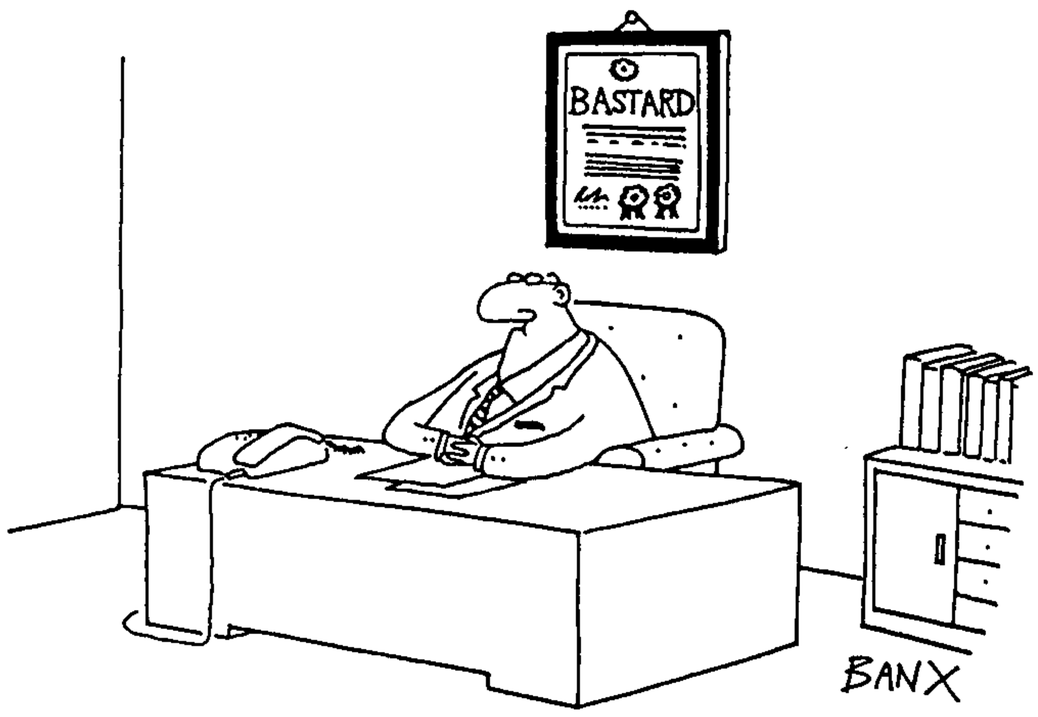
Dr David Starkey: — a typically fatuous comment, if I may say so, Janet!

Janet Daley: If you'll just let me fin —

Dr David Starkey: — nish. May I now broaden out the discussion a little, Michael? Why is Janet wearing that perfectly ghastly mimsy-pimsy floral dress?

And thus with one fell swoop I silenced the poor benighted female for a precious few minutes — saving her the embarrassment that would undoubtedly have accrued from her silly little observations! Cruel? No, I would never call myself that. Unless, of course, the editor of *The Sun* is offering proper reimbursement for it.

Away with you all, now. I think I want to vomit. Is there a studio available?



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Manchester Evening News

MR IMRAN KHAN last known at 286 Hendon Broadway. Believed to be in Hendon Central. Contact Debbie urgently

Finchley Advertiser

7. DO YOU HAVE PEOPLE ENGAGED IN VOLUNTARY WORK ON A SUBSTANTIALLY WHOLE TIME BASIS TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY ATE EFFECTIVELY VERY LOW PAID WORKERS?

YES [ ] NO [ ]

Questionnaire on low pay in the voluntary sector

Literary Review

Splish, splosh, load o'tosh

Down by the River
Edna O'Brien
(Weidenfield & Nicolson, £15.99)

EDNA O'BRIEN lives in Knightsbridge, convenient for *Conran*, handy for Harrods, hard by Harvey Nicks. You wouldn't know it from her novels. They're still set in the Ireland she left many years ago.

O'Brien's Ireland is a little different from the Ireland of Noraid and Terry Eagleton, however. Her Ireland of the mind is basically one great big bright green knocking-shop. If O'Brien is to be believed, Amsterdam's red light district's has nothing on the Emerald Isle. They're all at it, all the time, every which way.

The plot of *Down by the River* is soon told. An Irish farmer commits incest with his 14-year-old daughter (do any hold back?) and she becomes pregnant (as girls do). Dad tries to solve the problem himself with a broom-handle (nothing like the old ways is there?) but fails. Wee Mary (Mary Magdalene you might say) then tries to get an abortion in England but the Catholics and the Irish authorities (Same t'ing, is it not, often enough?) prevent her and make her a ward of court. Facing exposure, her father hangs himself (Irish eyes are smiling). Just as the judges are about to set her free, Mary has a bloody miscarriage anyway (wouldn't you know it now?). End of story (ostensibly set, by the way, in the present, although that's a difficult concept over the water).

It's a grand little tale of ovaries and rosaries, as O'Brien tastefully terms it at one point.

If you hadn't actually read it, you might think that O'Brien had delivered here a scathing satire, a flat condemnation of Ireland's backward cruelties. But alas no. She's Irish herself, remember (she does). So, knowing its miseries, she revels in them still. There is a bizarre contrast in *Down by the River* between the brutalities being described and the intoxicated lyricism of the description.

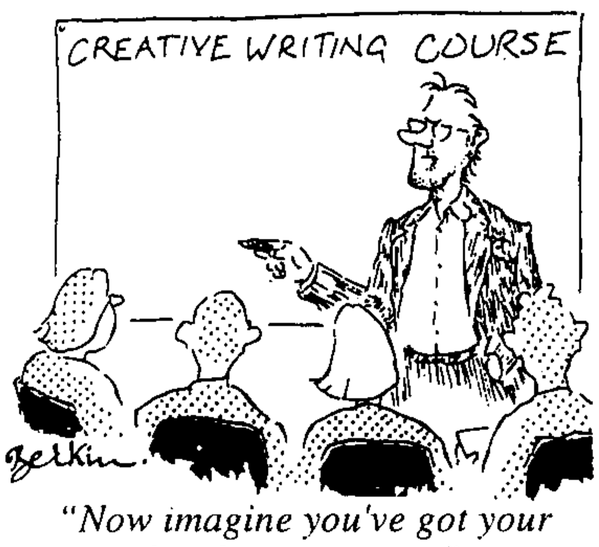
In its small way, it's as good and example as any of the whole Irish sickness of relishing past wrongs, being in love with one's injuries. The dog returns to his vomit, the sow returns to her mire, and Edna O'Brien keeps on writing rhapsodies about adolescent girls in rural Ireland.

She's a great one for wets of all kinds. In a grotesque interview with Peter Conrad recently she said: "You know that lovely phrase of Yeats — he says somebody is 'rammed with being'. That's what I want. To be full of blood again, to be rammed with being!" Conrad said her very house "seems somehow uterine".

Your incest comes first. A hand on the gusset, followed by "Criss-cross waxen sheath, uncrissing, uncrossing. Much. Wet, different wets."

A few pages later the horsies (Ireland's famous for its horsies) are doing the honours: "No sound except for the prancing, a dainty prancing at that, of the hind legs of the stallion as he passes into her, his possession of her a long glide, as though being sucked hungrily and moistly by every particle of her, her eyes softly gazing and the sense now of something happening, that primal transaction of entrails and juices, the moment contained, another life beginning in the dark secret spheres of her..."

A few pages on, young Mary's actually sucking on Da. "Her mouth not large enough. The thrust, like it might choke her, the girth that of her mother's deodorant knob but of a



"Now imagine you've got your head up your arse"

different taste. Rapidity. Then volitionless. Sea foam, sea horses, a lavering in her mouth..." Sea horses? Shortly after we learn that the local doctor's been seeing to her mum, too, in traditional farmhouse style: "Sat her on the kitchen table and felt her legs, he swinging legs; that licking sensation and the sounds, wild and strangled in the empty, biding kitchen." Aye, they do bide, don't they, kitchens?

Da's at it again afore long, a bit Yeatsian the description is, this time: "All became stiller, in some kind of laxed hiatus, cornices and ornaments to fasten on and then it was not that, the raw instancing, the tearing of flesh, like cloth, but with terror and cognition in it and that which tore was flesh to but devoid of thought, the same bit of air passing between them; a rank sluice, then the mad acceleration of limbs and joints with scarce an interval for breath..."

Primal transactions and rank sluices. Rammed with being. Fine writing or what? What, actually. This is *terrible* writing. It is revoltingly excited by what it fails at all appropriately to describe. We're used to baroque Heaneyisms, all peat and ploughs and miry darks. But this is something a little extra.

Even the broom-handle incident is presented with effusive fervour: "He was simply making certain to push it inside and wind and re-wind it, and almost at once she could hear her insides slushing, like an overfull bucket." Splish-splosh? An Irish bucket, that would be, of course, not a Knightsbridge bucket.

Books & Bookmen

■ **ALTHOUGH Amanda Craig's novel *A Vicious Circle* is not published until November, dozens of proof copies are already in circulation, enabling much of literary London to get on with the job of identifying the real-life inspirations for the book's ghastlier characters.**

As reported in the last *Eye*, the libidinous dandy Ivo Sponge - - pioneer of the "Sponge Lunge" seduction technique — bears a striking resemblance to John Walsh, literary editor of the *Independent*. However, some readers claim that Sponge is also partly based on Christopher Silvester, the spats-wearing hack and sometime night-club crooner who was a friend of Amanda Craig at Cambridge.

Craig's publishers, Hamish Hamilton, had the novel thoroughly vetted by libel lawyers, who were satisfied that all the characters were indeed entirely fictitious.

One trusts their optimism is justified. On page 38, we are introduced to the blond-haired Percy Flage — "poet, biographer, traveller, novelist and commissioning editor for Belgravia [a publishing house]". Any similarity to Andrew Motion — a blond-haired poet, biographer, traveller, novelist and publisher — must be entirely coincidental, especially since Flage is described as a "useless ass" who has "failed at every job in the business".

What of the book's chief villain, Paul Pinsent? He is a Cambridge graduate with a passion for Nabokov, who abandons his PhD thesis to earn a living as one of London's most savage literary critics. Oddly enough, this is also an exact description of David Sexton, reviewer for the *Sunday Telegraph* and *TLS*; more oddly still, Sexton and Craig were lovers at university but then split up with tremendous acrimony.

Another coincidence, no doubt.

□ SAMANTHA PHILLIPS, the alluring author of bonkbuster *Blonde Ambition*, featured in the last *Eye* after a cosy interview with the *Sunday Express*.

The interviewer soon ran out of literary questions and asked the "novelist" about eating out, instead. She simpered: "My loved one always picks up the bill, so ask him."

The *Sunday Express* hack did not have to go far, for La Phillips' loved one of the moment is one William Sitwell, a reporter with, er, the *Sunday Express*.

■ *THE positive gloss Pearson put on the appointment of Michael Lynton as new head keeper at Penguin books ignores two slight problems.*

For a start, Lord Blakenham and his fellow directors still haven't a clue whether they want Pearson to be a leisure operator (it owns Tussaud's and Alton Towers), a computer software developer (it owns the disastrous Mindscape), a TV company (it owns Thames and Grundy) or a newspaper publisher (it owns, but barely controls, the FT). Amid that sort of corporate structure, Penguin will inevitably have little priority — at least until Pearson is taken over and the books division is sold off.

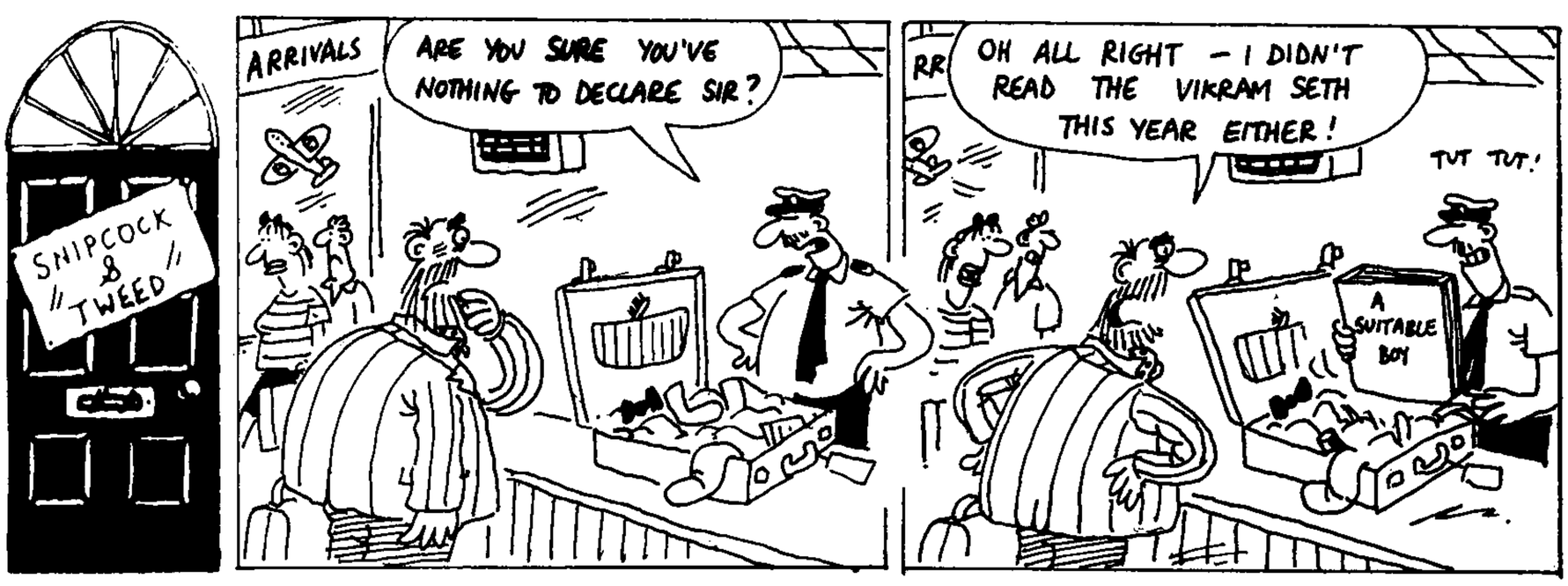
The second flaw is that while there was much media interest in the fact that Lynton has been running Disney's prestigious Hollywood Pictures subsidiary, there was much less mention of the fact that Disney is closing the company down due to massive losses from a string of poorly performing live action films.

□ IT IS generally assumed, particularly by editors, that there is a great deal of editorial talent in British publishing, but that in our conglomerate era it is not allowed to flourish.

If the talent is there, it is bewildering that months after the resignation of Robert McCrummy from the editorial chair of our leading literary publishing house, Faber and Faber — not yet an imprint of a conglomerate — no one has been hired to replace him. Is he unique?

□ THAT W.H. Smith has sold off its Heathcote wholesaling subsidiary to the increasing successful and profitable rival chain of John Menzies would seem to provide further evidence that Smug desperately wants to get out of books. Smug's new chief executive and ex-Post Office Counters' man Bill Cockburn, was quoted: "The sale allows us to further focus on our core and complimentary business." Boring, boring and more boring — not to mention the split infinitive — but it does seem to suggest that Smug sees a future without books.

'Bookworm'


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
ARRIVALS
ARE YOU SURE YOU'VE NOTHING TO DECLARE SIR?
RR
OH ALL RIGHT - I DIDN'T READ THE VIKRAM SETH THIS YEAR EITHER!
TUT TUT!
A SUITABLE BOY

footnotes

SNOUTS IN THE PENSION TROUGH

THE pensions ombudsman, Dr Julian Farrand, looks a mild enough sort of chap. But he is becoming a bit of an ogre to the growing army of directors who treat company pension funds as if they are their own corporate property.

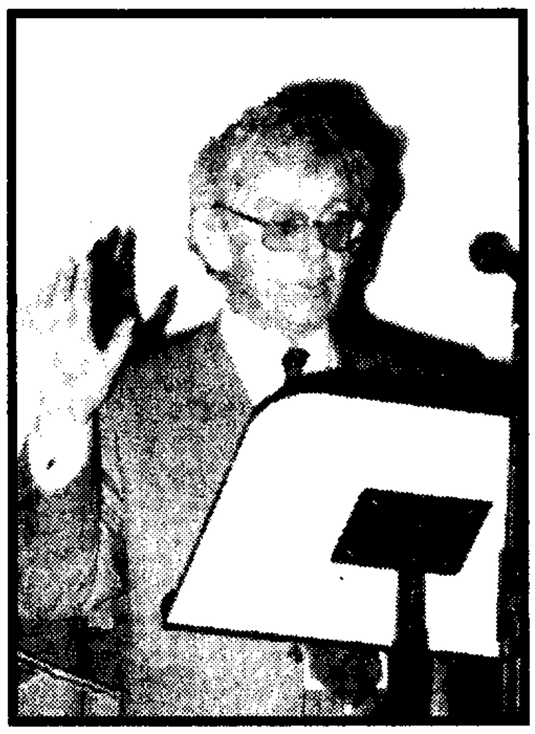
Dr Farrand's decision to adjudicate in a recent case involving the huge food combine Hillsdown (chairman: former Tory Defence Secretary, John "Belgrano" Nott) was shocking enough. His decision that Hillsdown's pension fund trustees had committed a breach of trust by allowing the company to swipe £18m from the pension fund of a subsidiary sent the company scuttling with its lawyers to the High Court.

Two QCs, David Oliver and Nicholas Warren, and a junior, plus the City's most expensive solicitors, Herbert Smith, were hired to put Hillsdown's case against a single barrister for Dr Farrand. In 1983, Hillsdown had taken over a meat and sausage firm called FMC, whose pension fund had a juicy surplus of more than £20m. The trustees of the FMC scheme were duly "persuaded" (by methods of persuasion common to all big employers) to transfer almost all this surplus — £18.4m — to a different Hillsdown pension scheme. The rules of this scheme were then changed so that the trustees could be "persuaded" to pour all £18.4m into the coffers of Hillsdown.

All these disgraceful transfers took place without the FMC pensioners hearing a word about them. Mr Justice Knox agreed wholeheartedly with Dr Farrand that they were plainly illegal. The point of pension funds, he affirmed, is to pay pensions to pensioners, not to enrich big companies. Hillsdown must now ensure that the FMC pensioners are paid back the money swiped from them.

The chill of fear which runs through the boardrooms was caused by the judge's immediate insistence that the pensions ombudsman has a right to deal with any injustices to other scheme members even if only one scheme member has complained about them. Where will this end? Is every firm which has helped itself from its pension fund now likely to be hauled before the busybody Farrand and forced to pay back what it swiped?

One of the most common tricks of government in recent privatisations has been



DR. JULIAN FERRAND

to use the pension fund of the newly-privatised firm to fatten it up — or even to fill up the government's own coffers. When the Belfast shipbuilders Harland and Wolff were privatised in 1988, for instance, the new owners, MEBO/Olson, were "sweetened" from the pension fund to the tune of £6.5m in the form of a three-year contributions holiday. This was wholly illegal, as the Northern Ireland Audit Office and the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee eventually discovered, and the company has just been forced to pay the government the £6m back. (They did so only after the government agreed to pay them £3m in "certain additional costs" of privatisation).

Much more serious for the government is the next major subject on Mr Farrand's agenda: complaints by former pensioners of the National Bus Company, which was privatised in 1986 and from whose pension fund the government swiped a cool £200m. The government's argument was that as employers they had paid large sums into the pension scheme. They were entitled, they claimed, to get that money back when the nationalised company was wound up. This view has not yet been tested in the courts. On the contrary, the European courts have dubbed all pension fund money "deferred pay", which can only be to pay benefits to pensioners. If Dr Farrand, to whom several former National Bus pensioners have complained, upholds this view, the consequences for the government could be very serious indeed. Earlier this year, for instance, with hardly anyone noticing, the government seized £2bn from the former Mineworkers Pension Scheme whose purpose was to pay pensions to mineworkers.

Billy Kelly, a former Lancashire miner, has issued a writ to challenge the legality of this transfer. If he is successful in proving that all pension fund money should be used for pensions, the government may have to surrender £2bn to the (mainly impoverished) pensioners in the scheme. This would seriously alter the government's forecasts for the public spending borrowing requirement and jeopardise what remains of the Chancellor's economic strategy.

THINGS THEY SAY

"If you happen to be working class, it's not a bad thing. They probably have less things to worry about, other than just getting the food on the table and how they're going to pay the bills."

TAMARA BECKWITH, 26, daughter of John Beckwith the property speculator and Premier Club supremo, quoted in the *Evening Standard*, 7 August.

Pride before the Fal

ACCOUNTANT Roger Harris is known in Plymouth as "restless Rog" from his habit of continuously leaving meetings of the South West Industrial Development Board, which he chairs. He has had to walk out of nearly half the meetings because, most annoyingly, firms advised by his firm, KPMG, are constantly asking the Board for government grants. Fortunately for Mr Harris, he does not have to go far when he leaves the meeting. The KPMG offices are in the same building.

All this walking out of meetings doesn't seem to make much difference to the success of KPMG-audited firms in getting government grants from the Board. One such lucky firm is FAFALB whose directors had the engaging idea that they could make a profit from manufacturing catheters in Falmouth. The DTI generously lobbed out a grant of £250,000. Sadly, the business didn't go very well.

On February 9, shortly before an arranged meeting with Seb Coe, Tory MP for the area, FAFALB director Andrew Campbell wrote to the MP to explain why things were going wrong. The firm, he wrote, "has received all but £37,000 of the approved DTI grant, which will just about cover current payables by the end of the month". This must have surprised the MP, since he knows that DTI grants are intended for investment for the future, not "current payables".

The FAFALB directors wanted Coe to help them out with "the protocols involved" in the planned visit to their factory last February of the Minister of State at the DTI, Anthony Nelson. When Mr Nelson arrived, however, his itinerary was carefully revised to ensure that he never went anywhere near FAFALB. Perhaps the MP and the minister were both embarrassed by the empty factory across the road. It once belonged to ROM Data, which got £850,000 from the DTI before going bust in 1994 in circumstances so suspicious that even the Fraud Squad is investigating (*Eye* 894).

Mr Nelson had been warned. Which is more than can be said for the Prime Minister on his recent visit to Falmouth, when he was pictured side by side with a prominent Falmouth Conservative, Mr Michael Jordan of Cornish Stairways. Mr Jordan, like Roger Harris, is a member of the South West Industrial Development Board, which agreed to give £350,000 in DTI grant to Pendennis shipyard a few months before Mr Jordan joined the board.

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

THE Conservative Party is no doubt pleased to know that the headquarters of its new fund raising operation, the Millennium Club, is to be found at an appropriately prestigious Mayfair address — the offices of its diminutive but perfectly formed president, textile tycoon Alan Lewis. However, how Lewis and the Millennium Club come to be there is a less than happy tale for the pensioners of the Lewis-owned Illingworth Morris group.

Although unimpressive from the outside, the Mayfair town house at 39 Charles Street, a short walk from Berkeley Square, is a desirable property. So much so that sometime before April 1990 it was acquired for £6m by the Illingworth Morris Group *Pension Scheme*, a large and well-endowed pension fund boosted by contributions over many years from Britain's largest woollen textile group and its employees. Lewis had acquired full control of Illingworth Morris in 1989 after several years as the major shareholder.

In April 1990 a subsidiary of Hartley Investment Trust, the wholly Lewis-owned company that owns Illingworth Morris, agreed to lease the property for four years at a rent of £360,000 a year. The Hartley subsidiary also had an option to buy the freehold at cost plus 25 per cent of any rise in the market value but minus the cost of repairs and improvements. A deal which gave the pension fund a not particularly generous 6 per cent income but offered the prospect of a substantial compensating capital profit given the prospects for prime Mayfair properties.

Alas, not so. In April 1994 the Hartley subsidiary exercised the option to buy Charles Street, for completion by April 1997! But the price was something of a surprise — £5.2m. Not only had there seemingly been no rise in the property's value since 1990 but the heavy cost of improvements and repairs would seem to have left the pensioners with a loss. Pending completion of the sale the pension fund was to receive interest on the purchase price at the lower of base rate or 7.25 per cent, perhaps in lieu of rent or maybe not. Again not exactly philanthropic terms.

The sale of Charles Street was in fact completed in September last year on a busy day for the Illingworth Morris pension fund. On September 1 the £36m-plus pension scheme refunded £5.5m of its £6.25m surplus to Illingworth Morris. The balance was used to allow the company to take a pension contributions holiday.

By coincidence, also on September 1, Scorefield, a subsidiary of Hartley Investment Trust, the parent company of Ilingworth Morris, acquired Charles Street — not for the £5.2m previously mentioned but for £4.898m, compared with the cost five years before of £6m. Remarkably, while all around it other Mayfair properties had gone up in price, Charles Street had fallen by 18 per cent. No doubt this was a function of the formula whereby the heavy cost of improvements and repairs was to be deducted from any purchase price. Hopefully at some future date additional moneys will be paid as suggested by Land Registry records.

Even so, Charles Street would seem to have been far from the expected good investment for the Illingworth Morris pensioners that it may turn out to be for Lewis, who intends to live there forsaking his nearby Park Lane penthouse in a block owned by the offshore trustees of the trust of which he is the sole life tenant, and Hartley Investment Trust.

Just what Illingworth Morris did with its cash windfall is not immediately clear. It would be quite incorrect to suggest that any of the pension fund surplus might have even indirectly found its way to paying the pension fund for its own property even though Illingworth Morris along with Scorefield and the I.M. pension scheme were parties to the transaction. After all, the surplus did not go to Scorefield or Hartley and there is a mortgage on Charles Street from Lloyds Bank. And anyway as many companies declare and the law does not contradict, the pension fund surplus belongs to them, not the pensioners.

Should any Illingworth Morris pensioner need further reassurance they should contact local MP Sir Marcus Fox, non-executive director of both Illingworth Morris and Hartley and vice-chairman of the Millennium Club.

RICHARD THOMPSON is clearly eager to emerge from the shadow of his multi-millionaire father David, who made his fortune with food group Hillsdown. However, he appears perhaps a little too keen on the short-cut of what might be perceived as incestuous business deals between his private companies and public companies in which he has an interest.

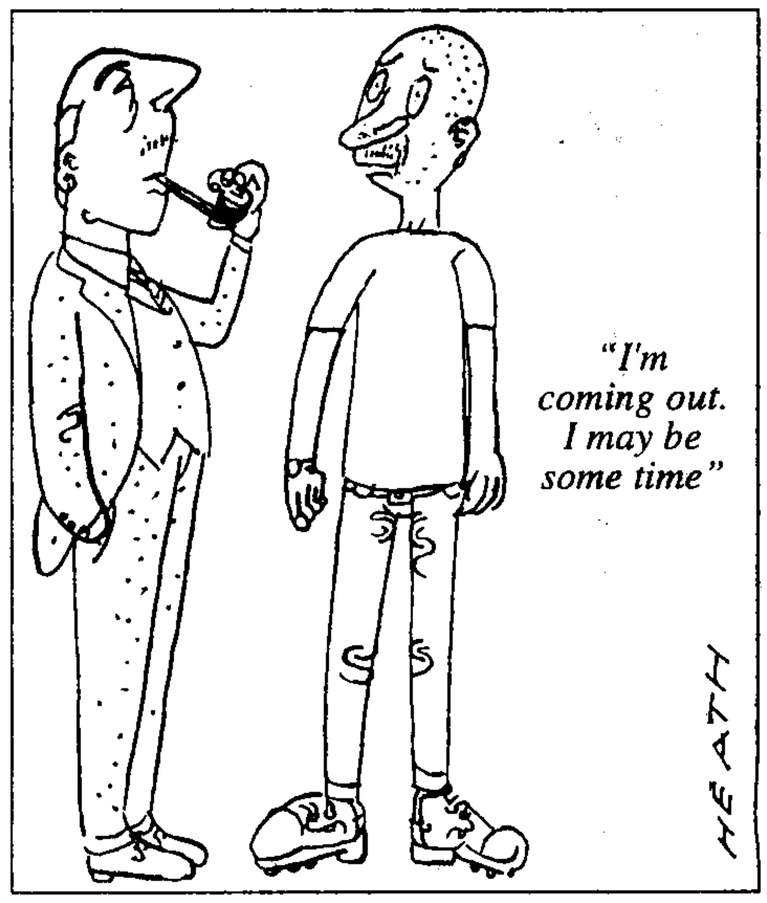
In the past 15 months, while swapping his football allegiance from Queens Park Rangers to Leeds United, Thompson has participated in three deals whereby he sold private interests to a public company — in two cases where he was already a director and major shareholder.

The first such deal was with Caspian Group which has since acquired Leeds. In June last year Thompson, already chairman, revamped the former Storm Group by injecting the Thompson Media TV sports programme-making interests controlled by Thompson Holdings (London) for £715,000 in shares, a large number of which would appear to have since been sold in a rising market. The media companies had been losing money for two years — £208,000 in 1995. (Thompson would also appear to be receiving a £250,000 finder's fee for his work on the recent Leeds takeover).

Then in August last year Thompson sold RG Foods, which had also lost money, to Whitchurch Group for £1m in cash and shares. Thompson is now deputy chairman of Whitchurch.

Finally, in April this year Union Square (chairman R. Thompson) acquired the profitable Algarve Golf Courses from Thompson Holdings for effectively £8.1m by repaying a Thompson-linked company.

Now these are probably all crackerjack deals and all come with guarantees and warranties as to future profits from Thompson Holdings (Whitchurch has already had to call on its warranty it seems). But the impression might be held by City sceptics that young Master Thompson is cashing in certain of his private investments, some not recently profitable, with the aid of public companies where he often may have influence. Such suggestions are as inaccurate as they are unmerited, for no doubt all three transactions were done at arms length with the benefit of fully independent advice.



THE reprieve from extradition for former Hong Kong banker Ewan Launder (*Eye* 902) granted by the Court of Appeal raises an interesting question if the Law Lords support the ruling that he should not be put at the mercy of the colony's soon-to-be new masters. Is it to be accepted therefore that he should never be tried for the £4.5m in bribes he is alleged to have pocketed while running the Wardley merchant bank? His old chum and benefactor George Tan is not so lucky and is due to be tried shortly in Hong Kong. Launder left Hong Kong more than 10 years ago a very wealthy man of property and much richer than he arrived. He evaded arrest, although the Hong Kong authorities do not appear to have pursued him exactly diligently, for several years. Since 1993 he has resisted extradition. Should the fact that as a result there is now less than a year before China takes over be justification for him getting home free?

MORE Sunday scoops. The PR men scored a full house on August 18 placing the impending Thistle Hotels flotation into every Sunday business section, even the financially challenged *Sunday Rapist* ("I buy it for the spot-the-girl competition and its kind words about me," says investor O. Oyston, HMP Wymott). On a smaller scale the *Sunday Torygraph* and the *Observer* both discovered Inchcape was about to sell its testing division to Charterhouse for £380m. And the *Torygraph*, with the *Sunset Times* and the *Mail on Sunday*, uncovered the exciting news of Britain's first shopping centre Visa card! However, financial news is not always so easily managed. On July 28 the Sunday hacks were unanimous that Allied-Domecq was about to unload its half-share of Carlsberg-Tetley to Bass. Sadly, the deal did not go down as the Allied PR machine hoped. But fear not. Last weekend the *Sunset Times* again forecast it was imminent. This time, however, there was no quadruple echo.

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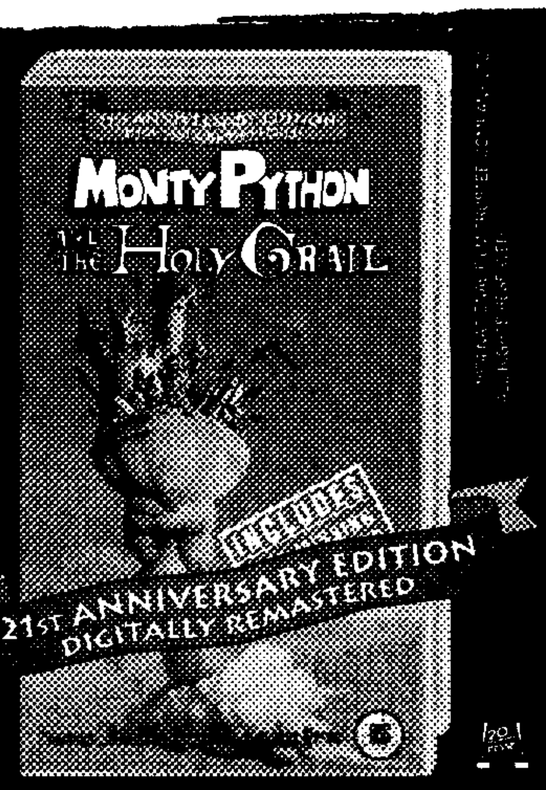

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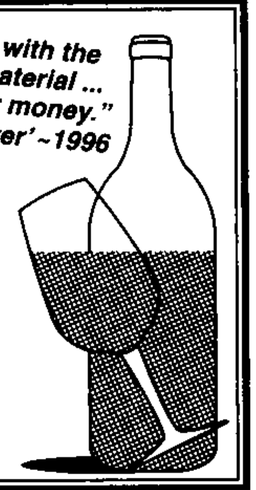

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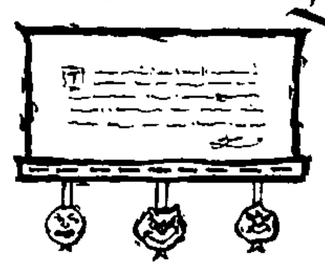

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Evening Standard

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SPEECHWRITING by Mitch Murray. See Page 31.

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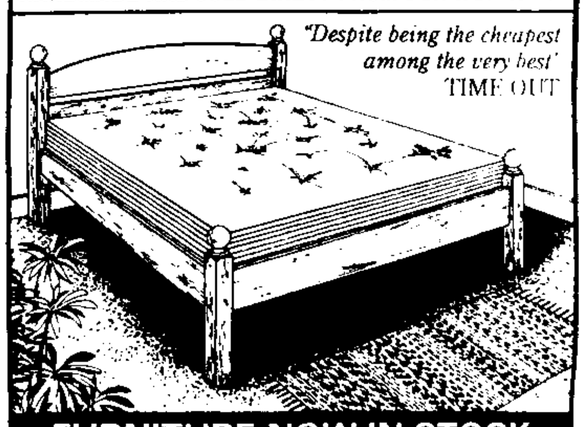

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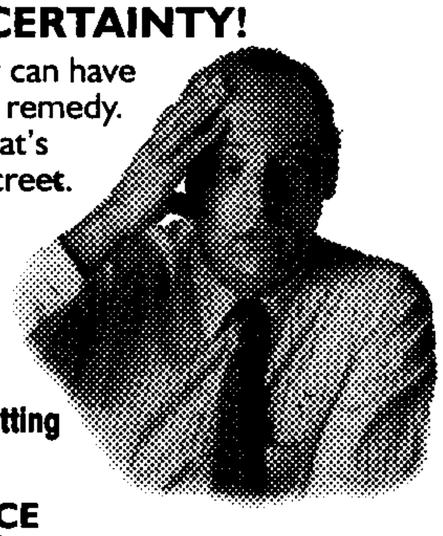

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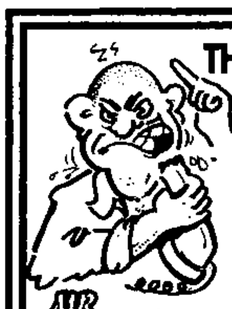

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(tick which traits closely describe you)

❒ Affectionate ❒ Fashionable
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❒ Shy ❒ Reliable
❒ Romantic ❒ Adventurous

5. Your Attitudes

(tick for yes, cross for no or leave blank if you don't feel strongly)

❒ Do you prefer town life?
❒ Do you involve yourself with community activities?
❒ Do you have many friends of your own sex?
❒ Are you interested in current affairs?
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(sections 6. and 7. Please tick for a liking, cross for a dislike or leave blank for no pref.)

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